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Mutant freaks, enjoy your last days. Duke's on a red-eye to the city that never sleeps.



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IN STORES SPRING 2002

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DESTROY MUTANTS ACROSS THE ROOFTOPS OF A STUNNINGLY REALISTIC NEW YORK SKYLINE

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Violence



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URBAN SHOOTOUTS ON EVERY STREET CORNER WITH OVER 25 NEW AND DIFFERENT ENEMIES



9 AWESOME NEW WEAPONS MAKE DUKE UNSTOPPABLE

Bad Guy Bios



PIGCOP

These guys seem to follow Duke everywhere he goes. The security force for Morphix, PigCops are dumb as a rock but built like a tank. Duke has a special hatred for these mutated freaks.



RAT-OID

These mischievous, pipe bomb-tossing creatures have been trained to operate Morphix's machinery and defend his secrets. Crossed between a sewer rat and a human, these guys are almost as skilled with a pipe bomb as Duke.



ROACH-OID

What's more disgusting than a cockroach? How about a ten-foot tall mutated cockroach that tosses sizzling balls of G.L.O.P.P. in your face? Don't get too close to this poster child for pest control – it'll take a few ferocious swipes at you.



"It's great to see the real Duke again."

–PC Gamer

"The visuals sport all the right bells and whistles."

–The Adrenaline Vault

FEM-MECH

Hanging out among the babes are some not-so-friendly imposters! Fem-Mechs are Mech Morphix's double agents, using their beauty to gather information from the streets. Duke has to keep his guard up, because these androids pack one hell of a punch.

LOOK FOR MORE MENACING MONSTERS AND INSTRUMENTS OF DESTRUCTION IN EVERY MISSION!



SHRINK 'EM DOWN OR BLOW 'EM AWAY – YOUR CHOICE

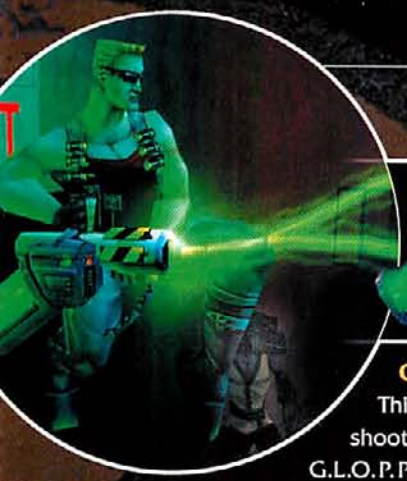


SLUDGING IN SEWERS OR CLINGING TO SKY-SCRAPERS, DUKE'S A ONE MAN KILLING MACHINE



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BAD-ASS WEAPONS





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This powerful weapon shoots a steady stream of G.L.O.P.P. at mutants, and returns them to their original form where Duke can crush them under his heel.

ROCKET LAUNCHER
The Pneumatic Rocket-Propelled Grenade Launcher is a devastating weapon that rapidly fires multiple units of explosive C5 grenades at high speed, blowing enemies to chunks.







GOLDEN EAGLE
Duke's primary weapon is a shiny, 24k gold pistol. Blasting off two rounds per second, the Golden Eagle has gotten Duke out of many a jam.



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GAME FEATURES

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8 HUGE, IMMERSIVE NY-THEMED MISSIONS: Rooftop Rebellion, Chinatown Chiller, Metro Madness, Unholy Underworld, Fearsome Factory, Tanker Trouble, Deviant Drilling and Orbital Oblivion

TRUE DUKE NUKEM ACTION AND ATTITUDE, great weapon effects and sarcastic one-liners

9 POWERFUL WEAPONS: Golden Eagle Pistol, Shotgun, Assault Rifle, Pipe Bomb, G.L.O.P.P. Ray, Pulse Cannon, Pneumatic Rocket-Propelled Grenade and the Mighty Boot kick. Plus, some weapons get powerful upgrades by collecting all Nuke symbols in the various skill levels, leading up to the incredible X-3000!

MORE THAN 25 ENEMIES ranging from the Gator-Oids, mutated Uzi-wielding alligators, to Fem-Mechs, female robot mutants with deadly whips. Classic Duke enemies like the PigCops will also be among the dead piled up at your feet



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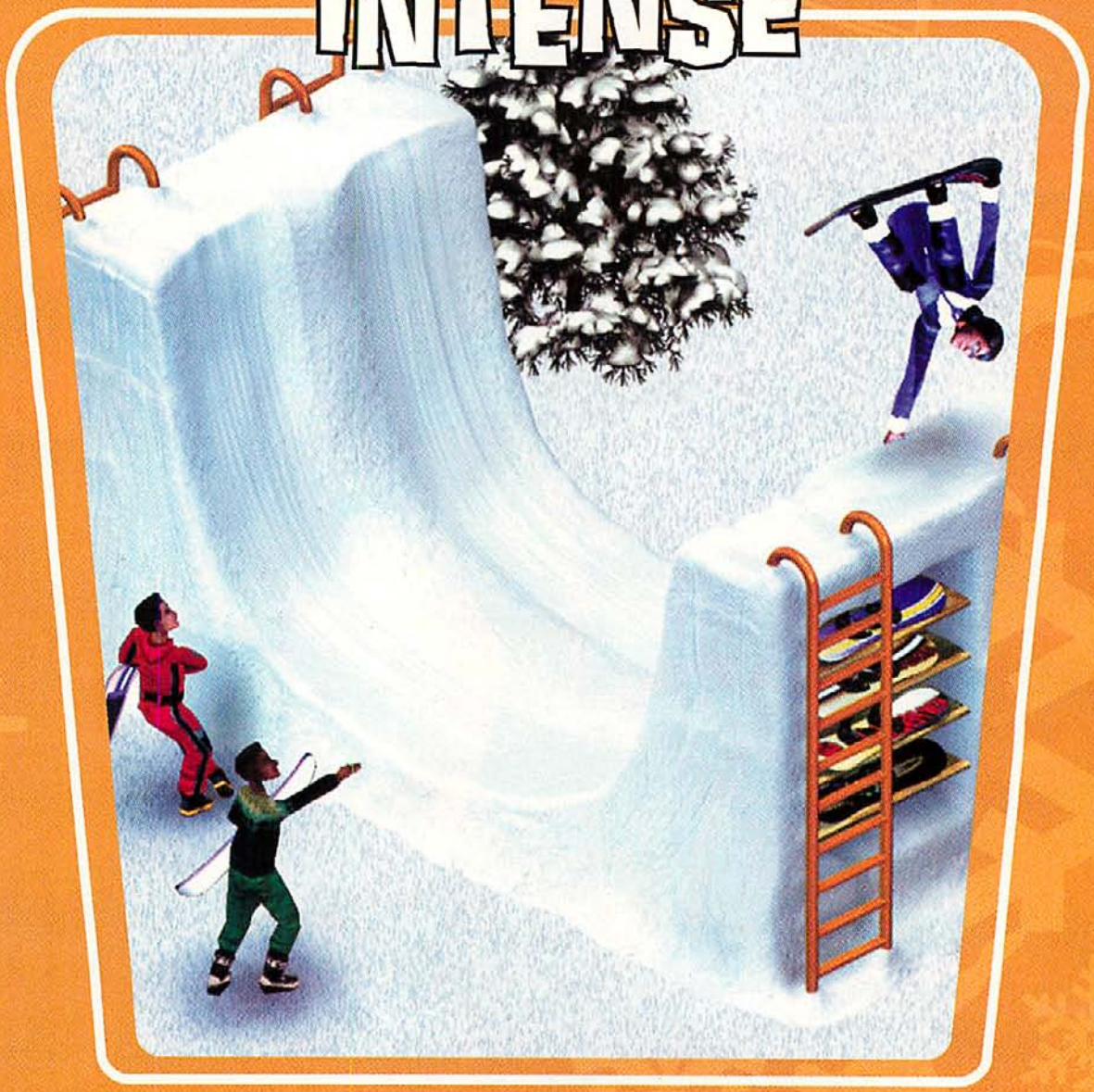
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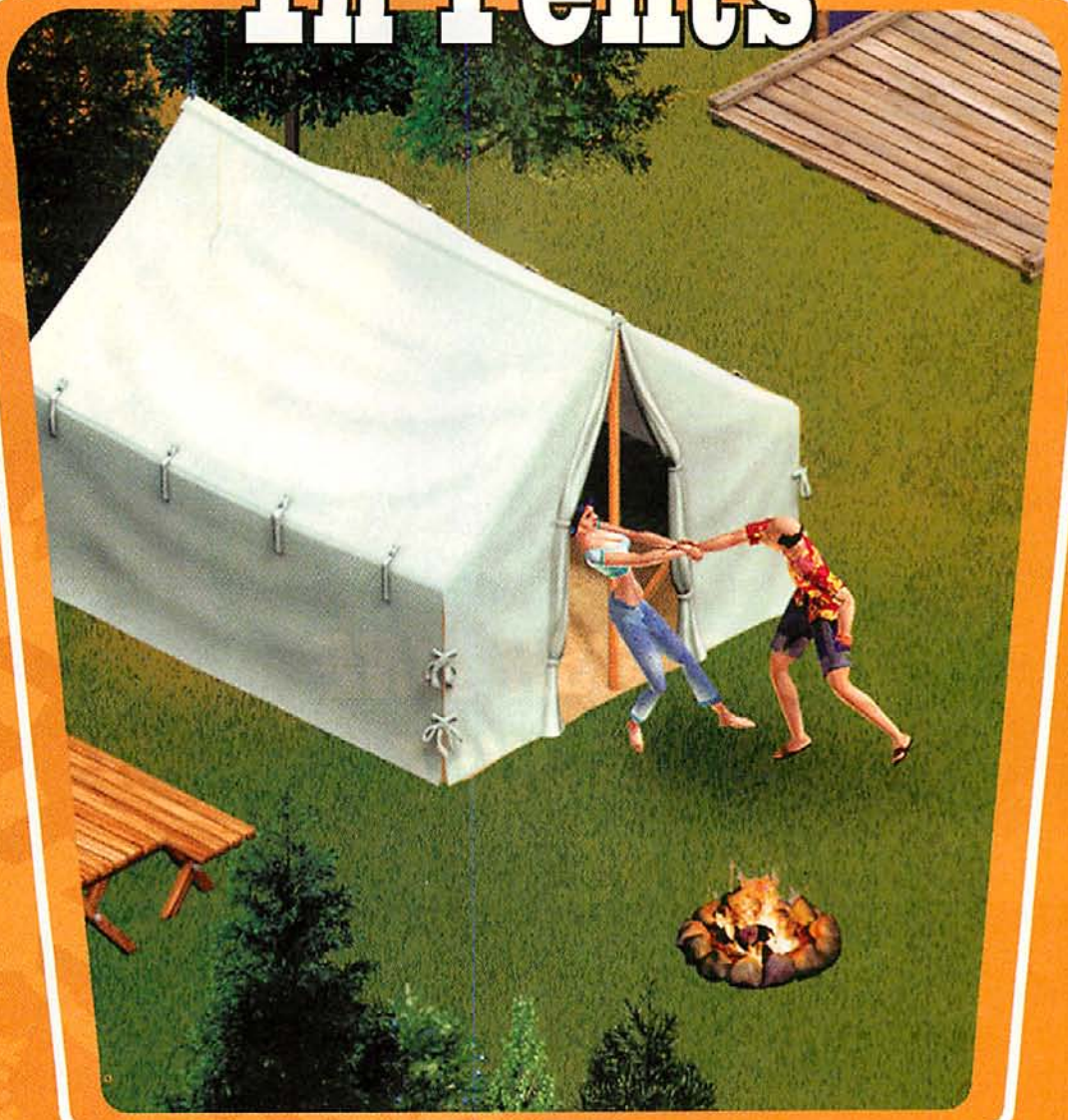
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In Tents



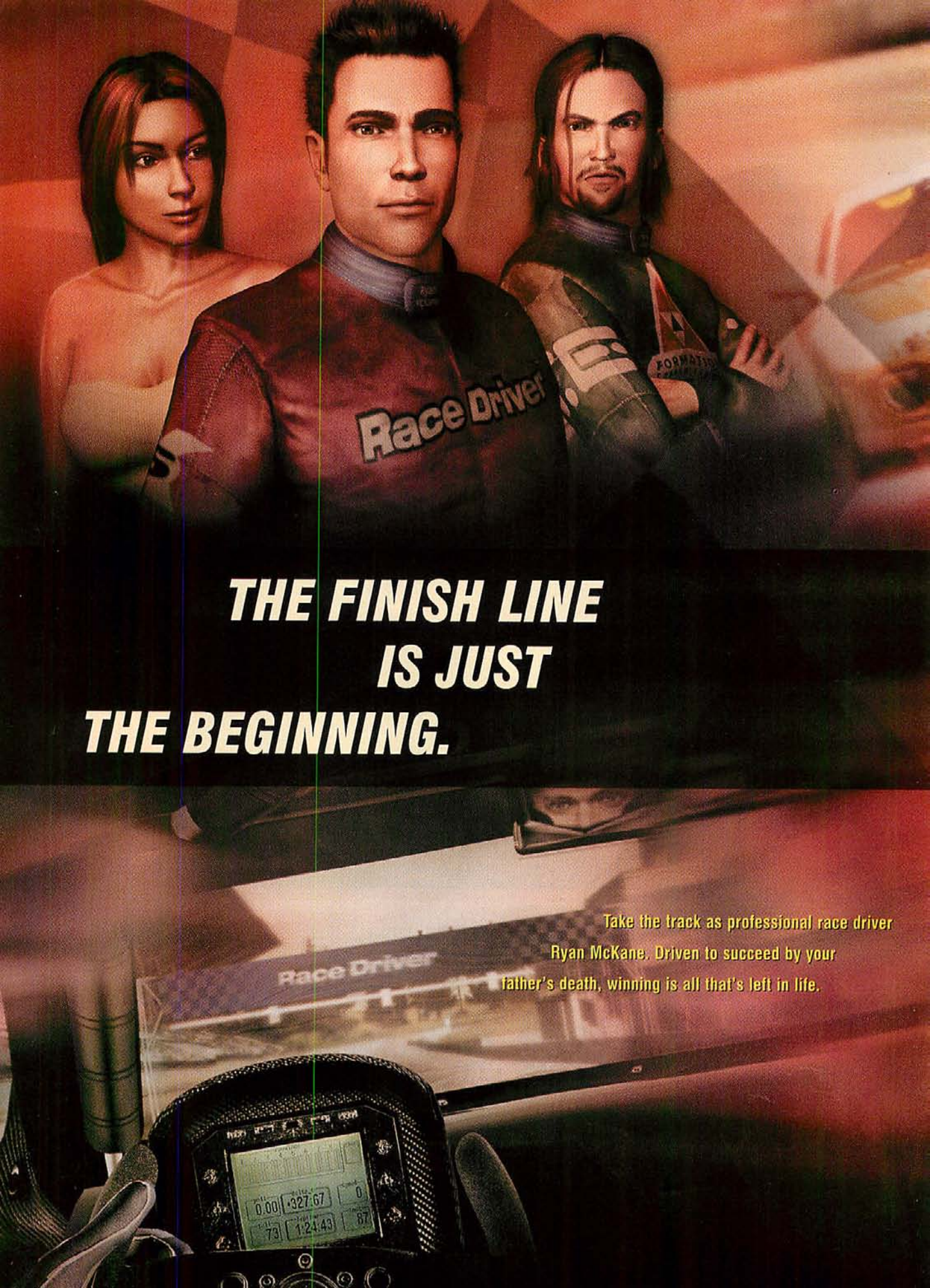


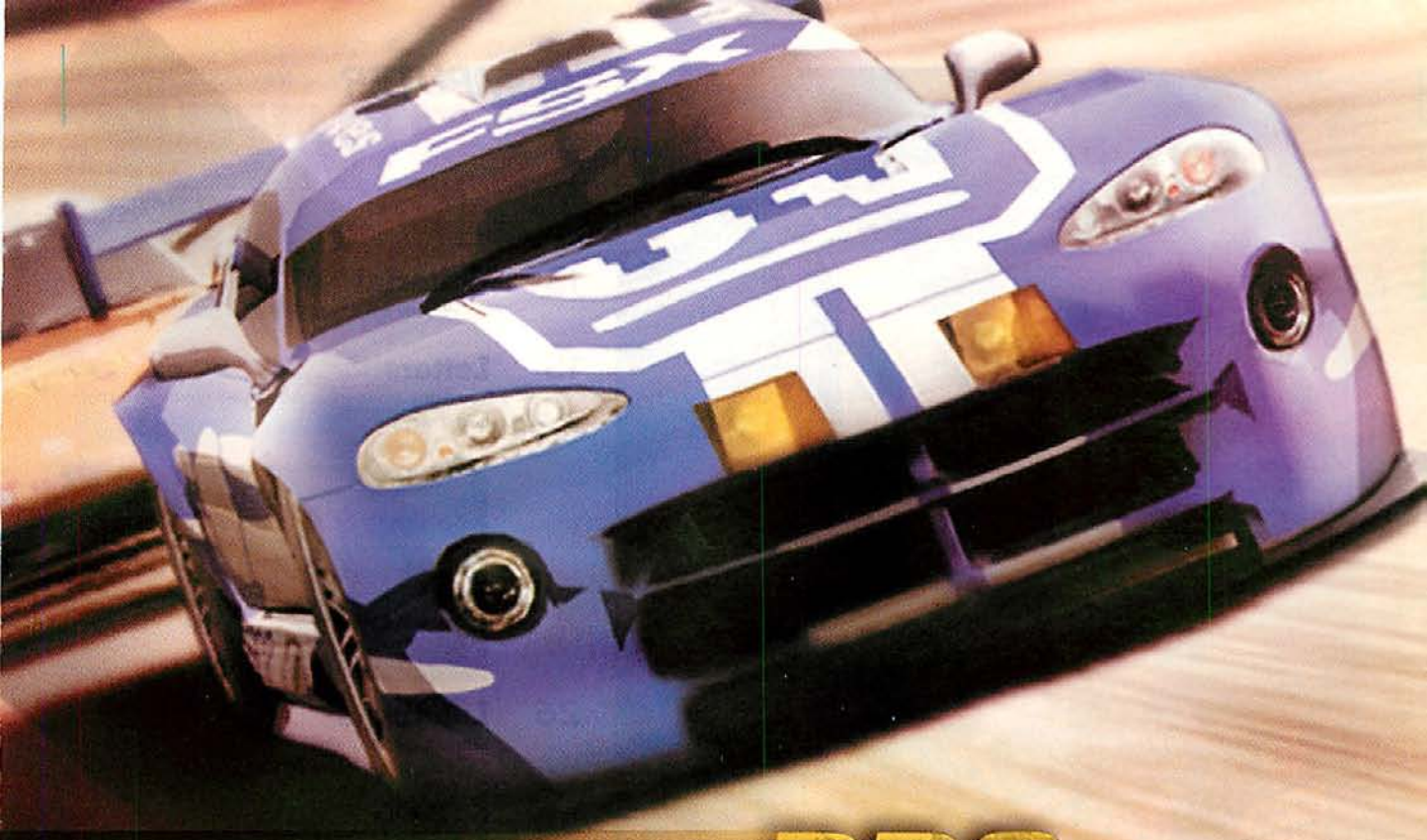
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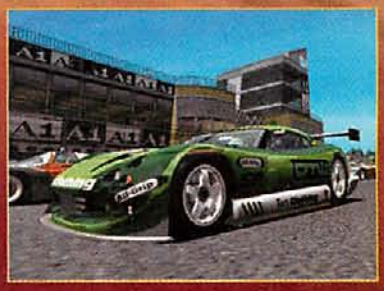
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GENIUS AT PLAY

Screen shots taken from PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system game play.

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
May 2002 Issue #214



60 COVER STORY
SimCity 4
Before *The Sims*, Maxis built its city on rock and roll. Well, actually, on *SimCity*, and *CGW*'s got the exclusive story on the biggest *SimCity* yet.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY DAVE PATCH, JUSTIN BROWN, OCEAN QUIGLEY, MICHAEL LONG AND KEVIN BYALL

13 Editorial
CGW's copy editor wonders what she got herself into.

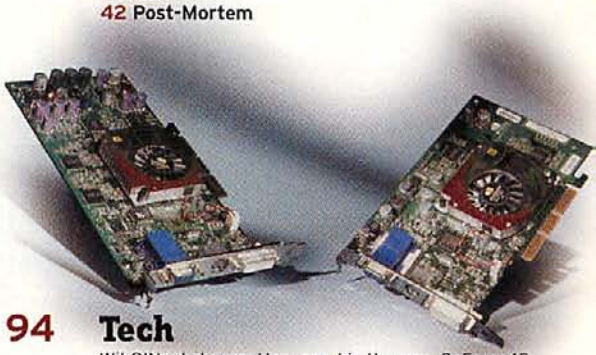
15 Letters
You complain to us, and we make fun of you. That's how it works.



26 Loading...
Pretty pictures of the hottest-looking new games, including **Jedi Knight II, Mafia,** and **Freedom Force.**

34 Read Me
We told you 2002 was gonna rawk, and we meant it. Check out our hands-on previews of three upcoming titles–**WarCraft III, Dungeon Siege,** and **Hitman 2**–along with first looks at **Icewind Dale II** and some real-live adventure games. Also inside: Scott McCloud goes on a 24-hour **Sims** binge, and in the *CGW* Deathmatch George Jones debates Wizards of the Coast about their **Magic Online** pricing policy.

Columns
37 Scott McCloud
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94 Tech
Wil O'Neal shares: How good is the new GeForce4? And should you buy one? Also, Tech Medics, Wil Power, and a mighty fast Killer Rig.

109 Gamer's Edge
Tips for CTF in **Operation Flashpoint,** killer course-making in **SimGolf,** tricks for the **Day of Defeat** mod, and if you're stuck with ***Black & White:* Creature Isle,** at least let us help you finish it faster and move on to better games.

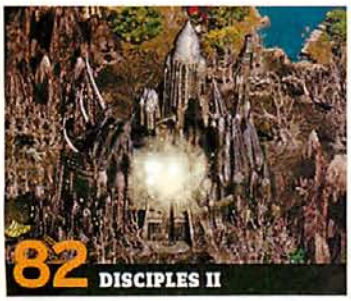
124 Greenspeak
Get healthy with Jeff, the Richard Simmons of the gaming world!



52 **FREELANCER**
Digital Anvil is whipping up a space sim like you've never seen.



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102 **TECH**
Cordless gamepads—never be tied to your PC again.



38 **READ ME**
Mr. Drow wants you to visit his neighborhood.

A million bad guys in the world and I gotta







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Favorite Quote:
"Everything has its price"

where's that 20 you owe me?!



HUMAN

- Debate team
- President of Student Council

Most likely to...
stab you in the back



IMSAEIS

- Editor of Galactic Gazette school paper
- Class Librarian

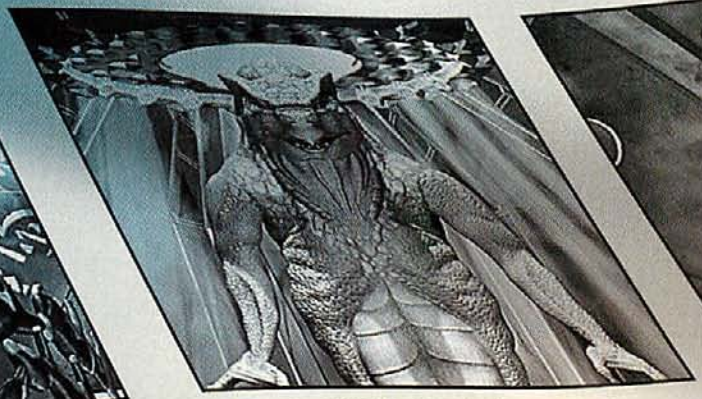
Favorite Quote:
"Keep your friends close but your enemies closer"



KLACKON

- Shop Class
- Young Industrialists Club

Favorite Quote:
"Production is the key to victory"



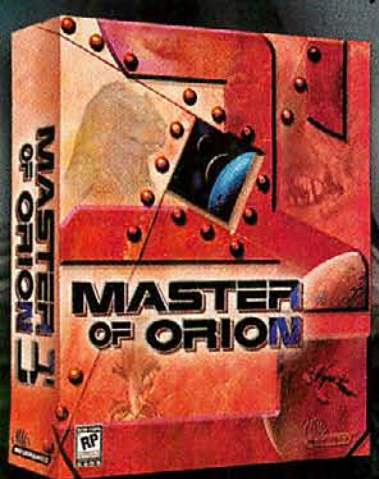
SAKKRA

- Captain of Thunderball team
- School Bully

Most likely to...
start a war

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Founder **Russell Sipe**



It's All True

"I'm the manservant manhandling your honey jar." Scooter's voice came wafting over my cube wall, as it so often does during any given day here at *CGW*. There's never a shortage of giggles to be had in this office, and I must admit that I spend a good portion of my days trying not to laugh out loud. I could spend this whole column on the freaky stuff that flies out of Robert Coffey's office.

I'm the copy editor here at *Computer Gaming World*, and most of the time I keep to myself because, frankly, I just can't compete around here. It's my job to correct other people's grammar—including yours, in multiple languages, so the next time you decide to write in and complain about someone's German, you better get it right. Because I'll find out if it's not.

I also keep to myself because, frankly, I know very little about games. But here's something that should comfort you, dear readers: These guys do. Yes, they talk about them and think about them and play them all day long. I've worked in places where the people writing "best new products" features had not one clue as to what said products did. You won't get any of that here. You might not always like what you read, but you can at least be assured that it's the voice of experience, if not reason.

You can at least be assured that it's the voice of experience, if not reason.

I have learned enough about gaming to know that you're probably anxiously awaiting some of the stories in this very issue. *WarCraft III* and *SimCity 4* got our full attention (it happens sometimes), and you can find out all about them on pages 34 and 60 respectively. This issue also carries a lot of pithy stuff about GeForce4 cards starting on page 94, offered up by William O'Neal, who somehow manages to overcome his bitterness every month to give us some copy.

In addition to being the most amusing place I've ever worked, *CGW* is also the nicest. Some girls might think it scary to go to work in the boys' dorm, but for some reason, they're real gentlemen to me. Maybe it's because I laugh at their jokes, maybe it's because I make them sound smart. Whatever the reason, they've plied me with free lunches and have had the patience to sit down and help me determine whether we should capitalize wizard, cleric, and Orc.

And for every late story and missing price I have to track down, there's also the reward of watching sick cartoons in Scooter's cube on Fridays and—wait, I hear Scooter again..."Do you know what that means? I can't see your head anymore! My name is Freak..."

Jennifer Wolfe
Copy Editor

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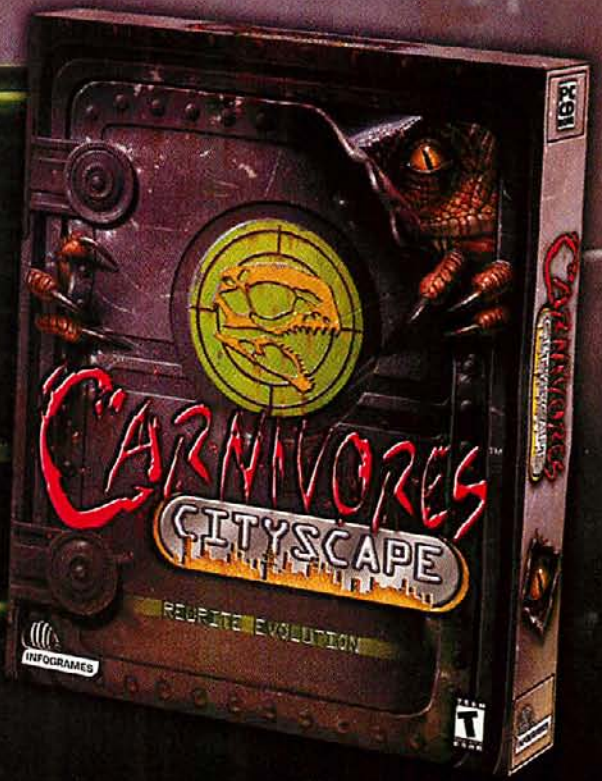
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Can't Live on Bread Alone

I admire two things: CGW and food. I admire *CGW* because it has managed to be around a lot longer than any gaming magazine that I know of. I discovered this when I was at my grandpa's house and found an old *Links 386pro* golf game. On the box there was a sticker that said "WINNER 1993 GAME OF THE YEAR, *Computer Gaming World*." That is a long time for a gaming mag to stay around. You are probably the only gaming magazine that can have a 5, 10, 15 Years Ago section in this country.

The second thing I admire is food. Without food there is no life. Without life there are no computer games. Food is good.

If you give me a game, I'll send you that *Links 386* box I found so you can show it off to all the other computer gaming magazine staff people.

John Marchi





Unreal Love

Why oh why did you guys have to go and ruin my life with your preview of *Unreal II*? You thoughtless, insensitive bastards got to play what looks to be the best FPS game ever made, and instead of just keeping it to yourselves and laughing like giddy schoolgirls at your own great fortune, you had to rub it in my face. You had to burn the screenshots into my retinas. You had to describe the new weapons in such detail that I had to buy another copy of your magazine because my puddle of drool smeared the print and made it unreadable. Do you even realize what you have done?!? For the next four months, *Unreal II* is going to be the only thing I'll be able to think about. I won't be able to work, eat, sleep, or function as a normal human being because I won't be able to stop thinking about just how f'n sweet this game is gonna be. Every game I own just seems so inferior to *Unreal II*, and I've only seen the screenshots! *Serious Sam TSE, Aliens vs. Predator 2, Medal of Honor Allied Assault, Max Payne, Return to Castle Wolfenstein* have all been made obsolete just by the preview of *Unreal II*. In conclusion, you guys suck! I'm gonna sit in a corner now and pout until I get a chance to play *Unreal II* too.

Jason Herrick

Employee of the Month

I just want to thank you and your magazine for helping me blow a couple hours of work at the hospital. Your magazine is the only thing that can keep me awake at night when I'm working. I read your magazine regularly and I am a loyal subscriber. Keep up the good work.

Rod
Bakersfield, California

You work at a hospital, and the only thing keeping you from sleeping on the job is reading a gaming magazine? The people of Bakersfield are in good hands, Rod!

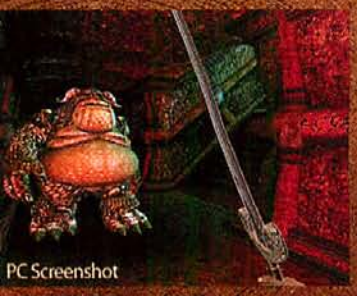
Plays Well With Others...

I've purchased several games lately (like *Stronghold* and *Medal of Honor*) that claim to be multiplayer, only to find out I can't play *with* friends, I can only play *against* them. Not everybody wants to go around fragging their friends. Some, if not most, of us would rather play with our friends. As children, our parents taught us to play nicely, but somehow that message was lost to the designers of these games. There needs to be some truth in advertising on these game packages. Multiplayer should be multiplayer, not multiopponent. When I buy a game that is multiopponent instead of multiplayer, I feel just as cheated as when the game does not run out of the box. Can't we all just have fun without beating up on our friends?

Steve Collins

"Be honest. How much did Sid Meier pay you guys for your suck-ass review of *Civ III*?"

ILLUSTRATION BY JON WAYSHAK



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-Computer Gaming World



Top 20 Games of E3
- GameSpot



#1 Xbox Game of E3
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"I do not care if I have a life, a wife, kids, a job, a car, a house, or a dog, as long as I achieve my life goal."

...And Then There's This Guy...

In your *Motor City Online* review [March 2002], George Jones wrote: "Granted, all kinds of gamers enjoy talking and making friends."

Let me tell you something, Mr. George Jones. If we meet in an online game environment, I am there to kill you! If I have an axe, I will chop your stinking head off. If I have a sword, I will drive it through your useless body; if I have a rail gun, I will blow a cauterized hole between your man teats. If I have a chain gun, I will turn you into cube steak. If I have a sniper rifle, I will put a vent hole between your eyebrows, and finally, if I have a knife, pray you have ammo loaded to hold me off because your neck is my treasure.

See you online, friend.

Dave J
Tracy, California

Two Interesting Questions

Be honest. How much did Sid Meier pay you guys for your suck-ass review of *Civ III*?

Tony LaRocca

What's it like having hundreds of thousands of people subscribing to your magazine to get your opinion on the latest games, then having them insult you when your opinion is different from theirs?

The Chosen

I Am Wil, Part Deux

I noticed that in your March 2002 issue, you said on page 100 that the "Inspiron 8100's 20MB hard drive may seem small, but how many stolen MP3s do you need?" I kind of doubt that a 20MB hard drive would have space for much of anything.

Harrison

Actually, it would have just enough space to hold all of Wil's brain. Meanwhile, you could hold 20GB of stolen MP3s on the Inspiron. Thanks for the correction.

We're Here for You

Hey *CGW*! I need a definition check. I always thought "nerd" equaled "computer freak." Have I been an idiot for calling myself a nerd instead of a geek for all these years? Please help.

AlexBS

Actually, Alex, you probably want to go with "dork." Thanks for writing.



He Likes 'Em Big

I'm probably the only one in a million individuals—but I want my big boxes. My collection of PC games going back to *The Bard's Tale* is over 75 strong, and people always comment on how cool it is. I will not buy any games that come in a small box—period. *Diablo II: Collector's Edition* came in a huge box and had a ton of extras in it! Feh to stupid PDF manuals!

Andrew Friedrich

Pool of Radiance vs. *Diablo*

Mr. Duckworth fails to realize the major difference between *Diablo II* and *Pool of Radiance* [Letters, March 2002]. *Diablo II* had to live up to the expectations of *Diablo* fans. It did that well. Nobody played the original *Diablo* for character development or a great story. They played it to kill monsters and collect loot. If that's what you want, *Diablo II* delivers very well. And, of course, *Diablo II* was playable right out of the box. *Pool of Radiance*, on the other hand, has a license to live up to. Right there on the front of the box, it says "Dungeons & Dragons." It was touted as the first *D&D* computer game to use the Third Edition rules. So here you have a game that has to live up to a rules system that allows for great depth of character development. It failed. Miserably.

Chuck Reynolds

I just wanted to send my little complaints about some of the people that dis *CGW*.

First: the dude that said the review of *Pool of Radiance* was hypocritical. You cannot compare *PoR* with *Diablo*, because *Diablo* is 5 years old and is a different type of game. *Diablo* never advertised deep role-playing; it advertised making lots of dead monsters and succeeded, while *PoR* failed in basically everything, including any aspect of role-playing. The review was neither unfair nor hypocritical. Every review I have seen has been perfectly fair about showing good and bad points.

Second: anybody that says *CGW* is declining and not deep enough. The reason I have read *CGW* for two years is the smart-ass comments and flavor sprinkled throughout. This is not the *Wall Street Journal*.

Last: the people that whine and bitch and cancel their subscriptions about innocent mistakes and little things like that. Relax a second before sending irate letters.

Keep up the good work.

Matthew Bedford

No and No

Even though I am only 14, I love your magazine and would choose it over food, drink, and almost everything (except *DAoC*) any day you choose. Your magazine has been a vigilant companion for me on days I am grounded from games. But a problem arises out of the mists: I am hella poor. My father is the chief patent counsel of the company that decoded the human genome. Yet, he believes firmly in character building (and not the type in *Baldur's Gate*). As of now, I have saved up $100, which is $200 less than the largest amount of money I have ever saved up in my life. Blame it on spending, obsessive-compulsive disorder, or puberty, I am without cash. I was wondering, could you give me a job? I only live about 45 minutes away, and I would do anything, including cleaning Jeff Green's pee stains off the wall of the office bathroom stall. I do not care if I have a life, a wife, kids, a job, a car, a house, or a dog when I grow up, as long as I achieve my life goal. That is to get a Voodoo Monsoon Egad-XP and play *Dark Age of Camelot* for three days straight until I am poisoned by the contents of my own bowels. Please help—I am desperate. Thank you so much.

Mister Bad Monkey

What is wrong with America today? Why are all these people writing in wanting

MAIL BITES

Does Ziff Davis exist, and if he does, is he a PC man or a wimpy console wuss?
Hugh MacKinnon

If I see positive notes about *Harry Potter* again in your mag, you will regret it!
Baz

I hate you all. You gave *Galactic Battlegrounds* only 3.5 stars. I hate you and must now hunt you down and all your relatives.
Insane X

You know how everybody complains about your magazine? I have no complaints.
Kyle

Seize the Empire!

The Battle of Red Cliffs was one of the most famous and pivotal battles of the Three Kingdoms period.

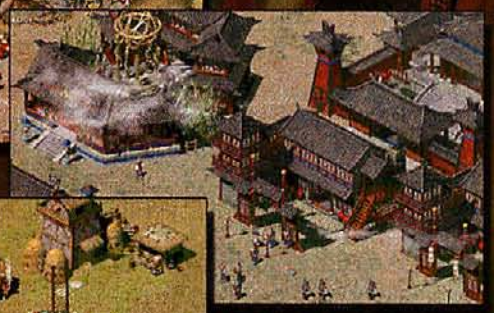
Liu Bei joined forces with Sun Quan and together they fought against Cao Cao at the Battle of Red Cliffs. Even though Cao Cao's troops greatly out-numbered the combined forces of Liu Bei and Sun Quan, they managed to defeat Cao Cao and in the process they prevented him from seizing control of the realm.

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to work for your magazine? What has made America great is our work ethic. Throughout civilization (*not* the game), countries and empires have thrived when the populace works diligently at productive labor. But sitting around playing *Civilization* (the game) will result in our downfall. Sure, you can expect that some Canadians would write in asking for jobs–just look at the state of their so-called country. But Americans need to return to their roots and take pride in a good job well done. I urge all of you decent people to stop whining for a job at *CGW* and get to work advancing civilization!

Steve Wagner
Chicago, Illinois

P.S. Please email with any job opportunities at your fine magazine.

Rotten Apple

I am an avid Macintosh user. I don't play many games, but I thought I would do some research into them. I saw *CGW* on the newsstand sealed in plastic. I examined what I could see to determine what platform it was for. Nothing. Well I took a chance. Big mistake. There was no mention in the magazine that it is a PC-only magazine. Even for games that are available on both platforms, nothing is mentioned.

Shame on you for false advertising. Rename your magazine *PC Gaming World*. May I have my money back? Maybe someday someone will publish *Mac Gaming World* for those who appreciate a different experience.

Neal Tobochnik, Ph.D.

P.S. Even if you publish this letter, I will never know. All of my associates are Mac users.

Hmmmmm. Since he says he won't see this, does that mean we can make fun of him? Tobochnik? What kind of name is that? Canadian?



If It Ain't Good, We Must Be Pinkos!

Your review of *Ghost Recon* makes sense only in that, yes, the special ops soldiers should be able to pick up weapons of comrades and continue the mission, and the system reqs are pretty high. But what else is wrong with the game??? The enemies almost all go down with one shot (you state otherwise), the AI is as competent as any I've seen, and I found almost no bugs.

Now to what I think is the heart of the matter. I have to believe, from past articles and snide comments found in your publication, that the review is tainted by politics.

I can hardly believe I just wrote that, but I can think of no other reason to give this game such a low rating. More important, it is obvious that for no reason (it's a game magazine, for god's sake) your staff goes out of their way to razz conservatives. Thus, since Clancy is very conservative and your review is ridiculous, I am forced to conclude that you put the game down because it was a chance to ridicule a right-wing nut.

Maybe I'm crazy (even though I'm not a Republican) but I can't figure out why this game didn't get 5 stars!

Dave, the left-wing loonie

This Month's Bad Idea

I think you guys should broaden your horizons with this mag. I'm a paintball player. For anyone who doesn't know what paintball is, it's a very addictive sport that involves shooting balls of paint out of guns using CO_2. Just search online if you can't figure it out. But to my point: I was at my local field and noticed that many people who play paintball also play *Counter-Strike* and other games! Come on, *CGW*, add a paintball section. Please? I'll give you beer! This is a great idea. You'll double your readers, will be able to get a bigger office, and can test some sweet guns.

Patster

Yeah, *Computer Gaming and Paintball World*. Sounds good. We'll run it by the publisher and get right back to you. Don't move.

Penny Arcade BY MIKE KRAHULIK AND JERRY HOLKINS



It's a lot easier to take on an army



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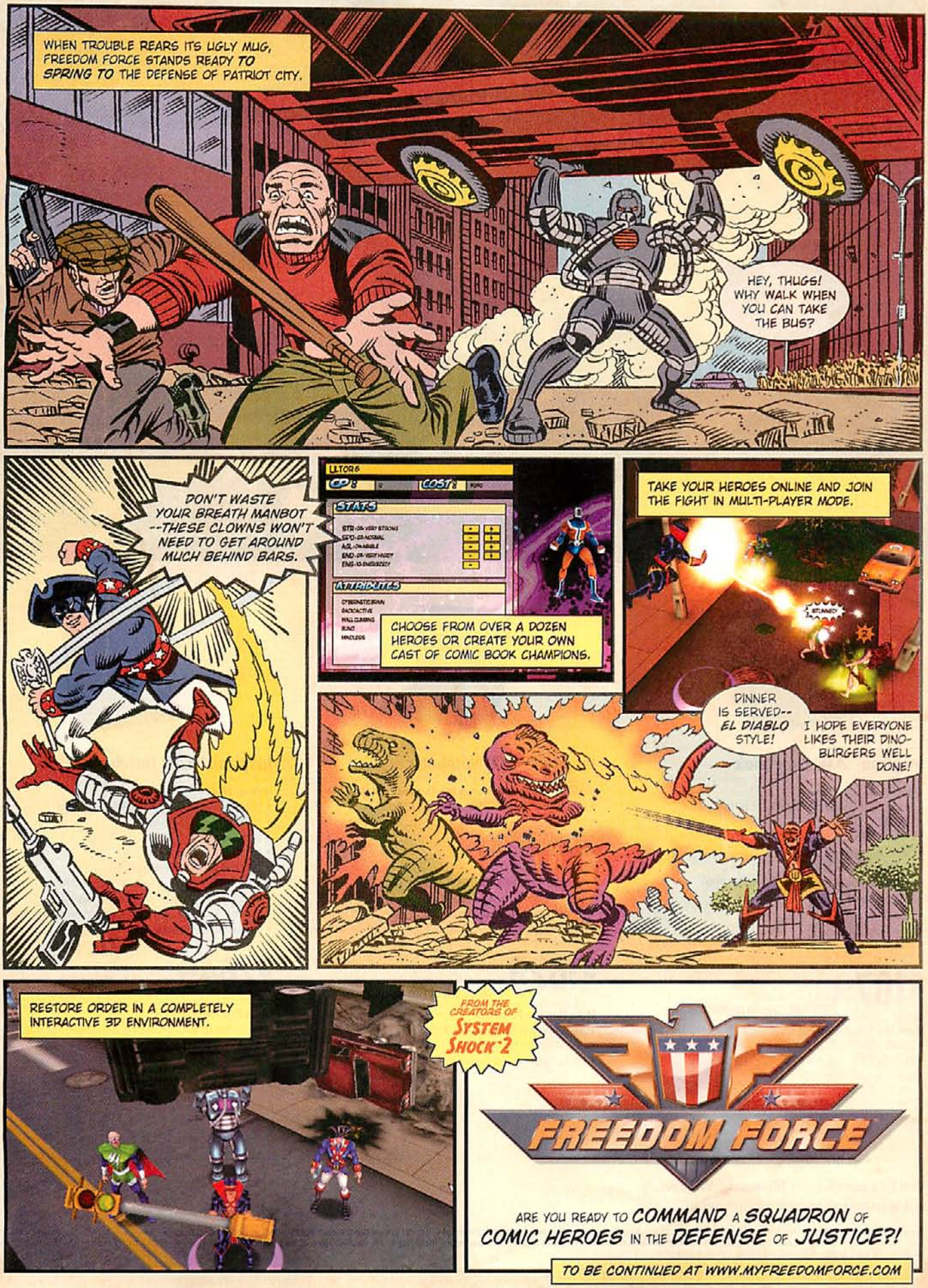
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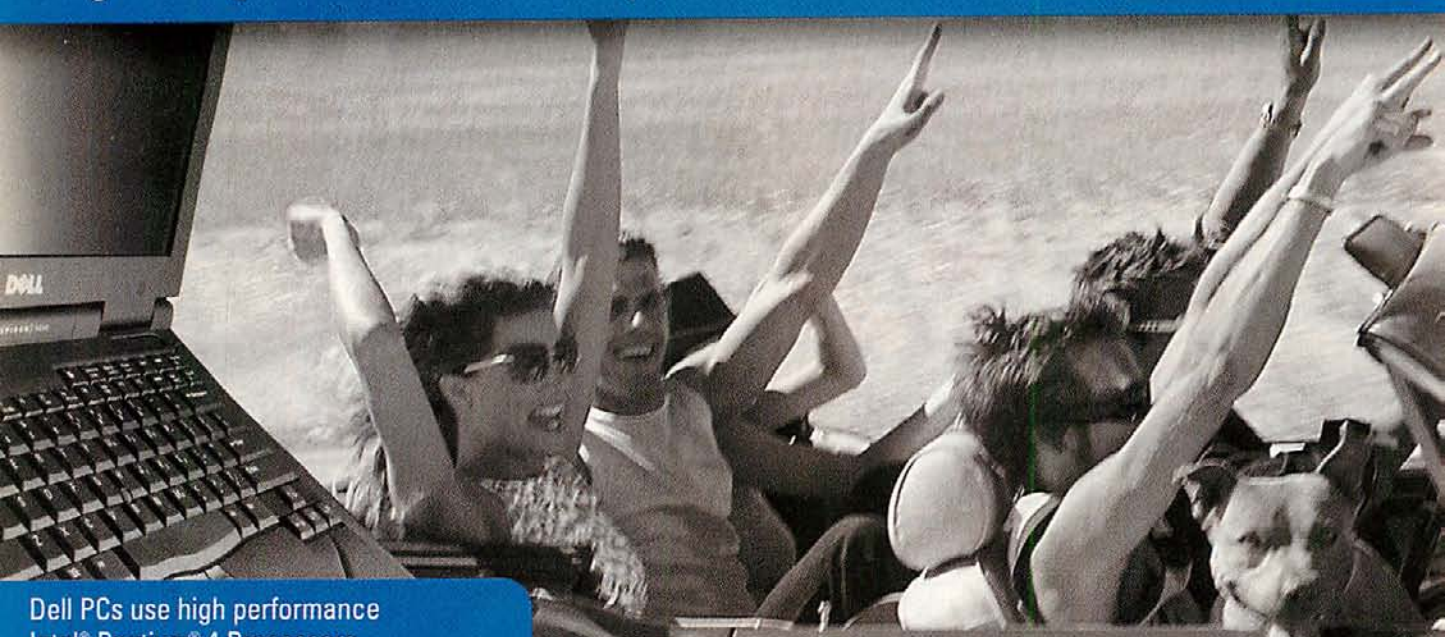





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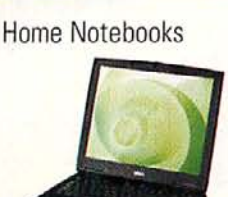

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The hottest shots of the best new games Edited by Tom Price

JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

Raven has quite the task ahead of them. "Take this beloved Hall of Fame game that is regarded as a classic in action gaming and in general game design when it comes to using licensed properties, and make a worthy sequel," said LucasArts. Raven can't just generate another neat little shooter or a decent game with *Star Trek* here—they have to not alienate gamers who expect the best. Luckily, it looks like Raven has done their homework, making sure to improve upon the original *Jedi Knight* while still preserving what was great. If everything falls in place, you'll be going Qui-Gon Jinn on some fools by the time you read this.



This hapless officer in the corner is exhibiting honest-to-god good AI—good enough to realize that his meager self is no match for a lightning-wielding Jedi.


Old standby Force powers such as Force Lightning are paired with snazzy new ones such as the Jedi Mind Trick.
This stormtrooper is animated with Raven's GHOUL system (last seen in *Soldier of Fortune*) and therefore moves like an actual person as opposed to a cardboard puppet.
Expect to adventure in bustling cities and vast outdoor areas à la *Jedi Knight*, rendered with updated *Quake III: Team Arena* technology.

FREEDOM FORCE

Was your youth filled with such onomatopoeia as *BANG!*, *KA-ZAM!*, and the ubiquitous *POW!*? Did four-color sagas created by the likes of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Steve Ditko eat up your nickels and dimes? Such apparently was the case for the crew over at Irrational Games, who set out to create the one comic book game that won't be cancelled. With the genius blending of pausable, real-time, superhero character development and colorful action all around, *Freedom Force* won't just be a good comic book game, it'll be a great game, period. Scour the shelves, true believer, for the game should be done as we speak.





The action occurs in real time, but you can pause anytime to issue orders or spin the camera around to make your very own cool splash page (kind of like we're doing here).

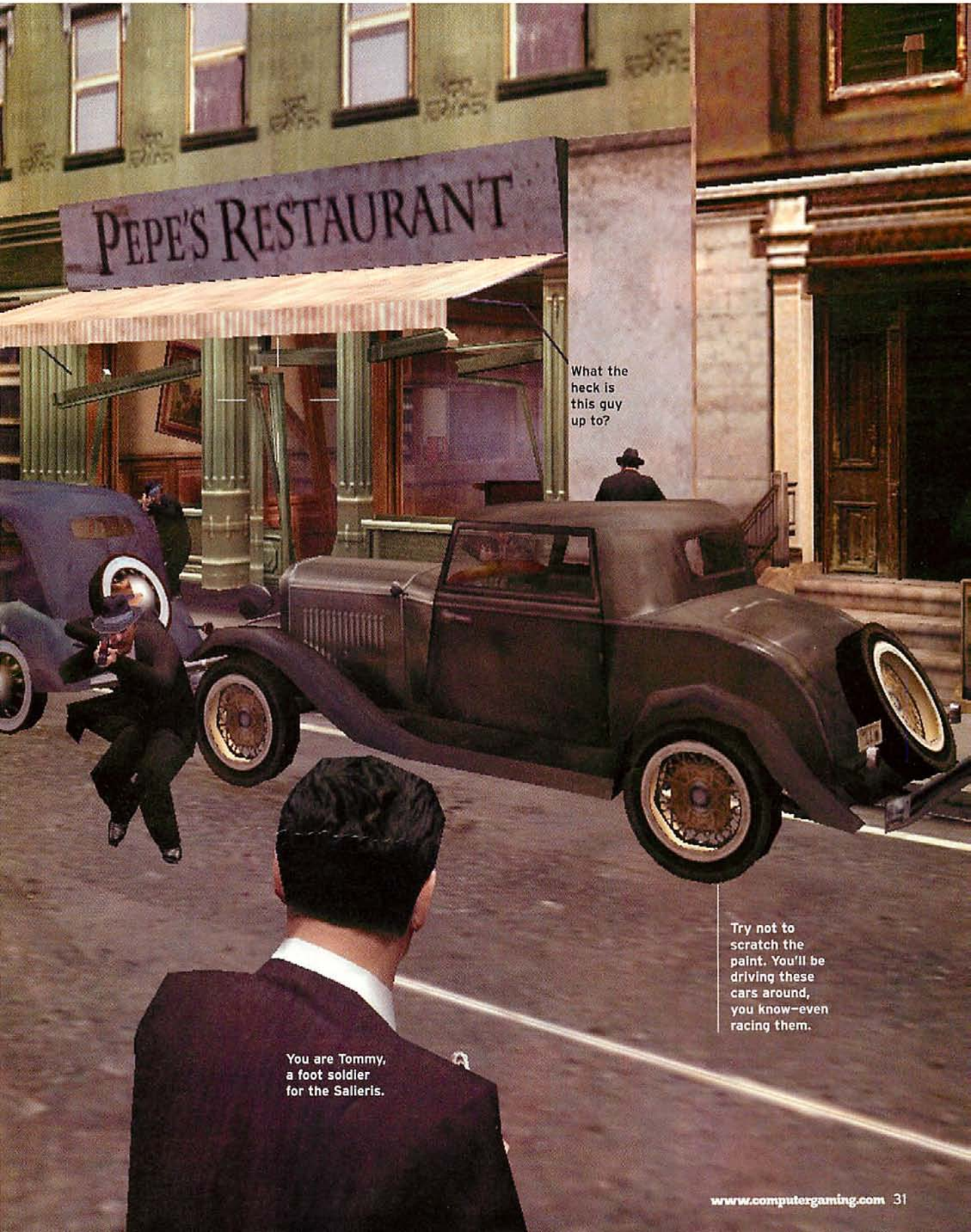
Check it out! El Diablo, Sea Urchin, and Alchemiss all together in one screen! Playing this level is like reading an issue of *CGW Team-Up*!

MAFIA

Criminal behavior seems to be a popular theme in games nowadays. We'll take ours with a dash of history, if you please. *Mafia*'s classic mobster setting of the 1930s should provide for some good old-fashioned hard-boiled action that seems to be sorely missing in action games nowadays. But that's not all. There's also an expansive game-world covering 12 square miles, a host of classic period cars, and a gritty storyline about rival families tangled in a brutal mob war. What more could you ask for? Other than some natty spats, a fedora, and a classy dame on your arm.

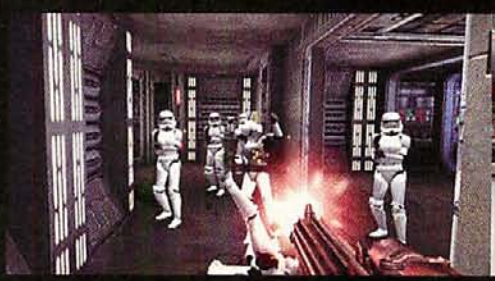


These thugs are on the side of the Morellos, the Salieris' mortal enemies, and by extension, yours. Take out this whole crew and you may become a made man.


PEPE'S RESTAURANT
What the heck is this guy up to?
Try not to scratch the paint. You'll be driving these cars around, you know—even racing them.
You are Tommy, a foot soldier for the Salieris.

STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

He's a loner. A rebel. A mercenary. And now Kyle Katarn is about to face an enemy from the shadows of his own past. He must take up the lightsaber he vowed never to use again. To draw upon the strength of the Force within him. The powers he cast aside. He must utilize a whole







arsenal of ruinous weapons. From the Jedi Academy to the Smuggler's Moon, he will battle new, menacing dark forces. To discover the true secrets of the Jedi. To prevail. It's first-person action at its most challenging. Are you ready to step up? Learn how at **jediknight2.lucasarts.com**



TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

PC CD ROM

RAVEN

ACTIVISION.

LUCAS Arts

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Official *Star Wars* Web Site www.starwars.com

Read Me

A smorgasbord of news, opinion, and random stuff **Edited by Ken Brown**



UPCOMING

Beta-Mania

Early versions of the most anticipated games of the year infest *CGW*'s hard drives By Tom Price and Thierry Nguyen







INSIDE



SCOTT McCLOUD
Playing *The Sims* for 24 hours...straight. **Page 37**



ICEWIND DALE II
More thwacking fun from Black Isle. **Page 38**



SW GALAXIES
Guess who's hunting you down for a few intergalactic credits. **Page 41**



FOREIGN AID
Adventure genre gets a boost from faraway friends. **Page 42**

After a disappointing 2001, we were hoping for better in 2002, and it already looks like we're getting our wish. Three big-time betas showed up in our hairy palms this month–*WarCraft III*, *Dungeon Siege*, and *Hitman 2*–and all left us ready for more. Ready for a few spoilers? Then read on.



WarCraft III

CGW finally got its hands on the Holy Grail that is the *WarCraft III* beta, and we've been banging on it ever since. The game feels like an extremely focused version of *StarCraft*; the nature of the battles is much more tactical, yet the racial variety is kept intact. Orcs and Humans are traditional standbys, while Night Elves and Undead borrow a little from Zerg and Protoss (respectively), while adding their own twists to spells and unit makeup.

The focus is on heroes and their little armies rather than the massive armadas of previous games. For example, upkeep means that having a large army has the side effect of making your units less efficient at resource gathering; for every 10 gold/lumber, you only see 4. Also, a sufficiently leveled-up hero can turn the tide of battle with some smart use of abilities, and there are plenty of neutral "creeps" laying around for your heroes to gain experience from. The Tab key will cycle through unit types in a given group, allowing more finesse in things like casting spells and handling combined arms assaults. Finally, the art direction looks great, and the signature personality found in *StarCraft* and *WarCraft II* is in full effect.

Three big-time betas showed up in our hairy palms this month and all left us ready for more.

Unfortunately, the beta has started to devolve into the rush mentality, but we're optimistic that Blizzard will tweak and tweak and tweak until the game plays more like a tactical RPG and less like a rush-happy RTS. Battle.net has still been fun, and it makes us all the more anxious for whatever fantasy epic Blizzard has set up for single-player.

Dungeon Siege

Dungeon Siege has been impressing our tights right off ever since we first saw it a few years back. Far more than just a 3D *Diablo*, *Dungeon Siege* could revolutionize hack-'n'-slash RPGs and actually succeed in being more habit-forming than Blizzard's famously addictive game. Getting our grubby gauntlets on a partial content build (essentially, the first 20 percent of the game) has tided us over in the meantime.

The graphics are one of the main draws of *DS*, and they never cease to impress. Forests are dark and mysterious but also magical and ethereal, with swaying trees, odd flora and fauna, and the occasional faerie. Lighting effects, on spells as well as in magical glades and dimly lit dungeons, are also fantastic. Speaking of dungeons, you'll be spending plenty of time underground, and the highly touted transitions–from above ground to below–are really impressive.

Gameplay is top notch as well. While not set at the blistering pace of *Diablo*, *DS* feels more like realistic combat. Controlling your characters is a snap, with a very simple point-and-click system. Weapon and spell selection is easy thanks to a simple four-slot setup (Melee, Ranged, Magic 1, and Magic 2) and inventory is easy to deal with. Newbies will find the whole system easy to understand and use, from the simplified attribute and leveling system to the really good party AI.



Even the non-RPG fans among us had a lot of fun with this game. *Dungeon Siege* will be a must-have title for more than just RPG gamers when it hits shelves later this spring.

Hitman 2

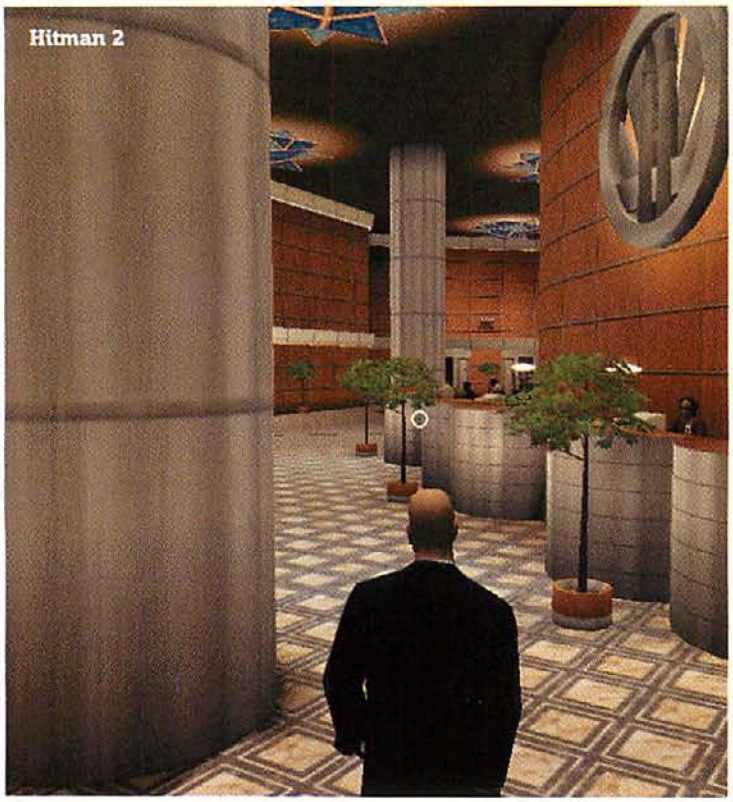
We have always appreciated *Hitman*'s stylish presentation and the cinematic influences it wore on its bloodstained sleeve. But niggling concerns hindered our enjoyment of the game and prevented us from fully recommending it. However, the build of *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin* that we've been playing lately indicates that a lot of those concerns have been addressed, and it gives us hope that *Hitman 2* will live up to the potential that the series has always had.

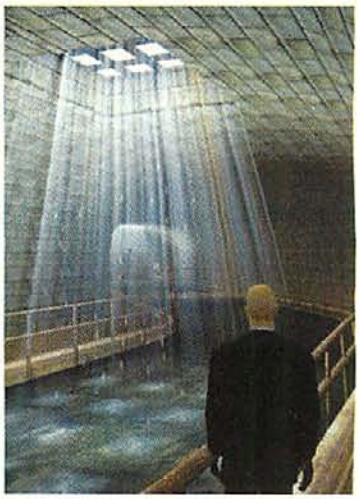
The gameplay hasn't changed significantly from the prior version, except in

WARCRAFT III
GENRE: **RTS**
RELEASE DATE: **Q2 2002**
PUBLISHER: **Vivendi Universal**
DEVELOPER: **Blizzard**

DUNGEON SIEGE
GENRE: **RPG**
RELEASE DATE: **Q2 2002**
PUBLISHER: **Microsoft**
DEVELOPER: **Gas Powered Games**

HITMAN 2
GENRE: **Action**
RELEASE DATE: **Q3 2002**
PUBLISHER: **Eidos Interactive**
DEVELOPER: **IO Interactive**


Hitman 2





two notable ways. For one, you can now save anywhere in a mission. This is crucial, considering how complex and involved the missions can be. Also, the developers at IO have included a first-person view. This will be great for gamers who are turned off by third-person perspective, although we really like looking at that UPC symbol on the back of 47's head all day. And we also enjoy seeing him in the crazy uniforms he steals to infiltrate areas.

Graphically, *Hitman 2* looks wonderful, much better than the original. It's full of spectacular lighting effects and high-resolution textures, but it never loses believability. In fact, the locales feel more realistic than ever. The St. Petersburg subway level is particularly impressive. The missions range from Italy to Russia to Kuala Lumpur and more, and the whole game is punctuated by a gorgeous soundtrack featuring the Budapest Symphony Orchestra and Budapest Radio Choir.

The best thing we can say about this build is that it has us looking forward to playing the full version of *Hitman 2*. And that's something we probably wouldn't have said after finishing the original.

REALITY CHECK: GAMES OF THE YEAR EDITION

CGW	PC Gamer	CGM	Gamespot	IGN	GAMESPY
OVERALL GOY Operation Flashpoint	Ghost Recon	Civilization III	Serious Sam	Ghost Recon	Empire Earth
ACTION Aliens vs. Predator 2	Max Payne	Operation Flashpoint	Max Payne	Return to Castle Wolfenstein	Operation Flashpoint
RPG Wizardry 8	Arcanum	Arcanum/Wizardry 8[1]	Wizardry 8	Arcanum	Dark Age of Camelot
SIMULATION IL-2 Sturmovik	MS Flight Sim 2002	IL-2 Sturmovik	IL-2 Sturmovik	Independence War 2	IL-2 Sturmovik
STRATEGY Kohan	Kohan/Civilization III[2]	Kohan/Civilization III[2]	Civilization III	Europa Universalis II	Civilization III
EXPANSION Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal	C&C: Yuri's Revenge/ BG2: Throne of Bhaal[1]	Diablo II: Lord of Destruction	C&C: Yuri's Revenge	BG2: Throne of Bhaal	BG2: Throne of Bhaal
SPORTS High Heat 2002	High Heat 2002	High Heat 2002	FIFA 2002	NHL 2002	Championship Manager
ONLINE Dark Age of Camelot	Anarchy Online	Dark Age of Camelot	Dark Age of Camelot	Dark Age of Camelot	N/A
HARDWARE Fast CPUs	N/A	GeForce3	N/A	N/A	N/A

1: There was a tie between the two titles. 2: The first title won real-time strategy, while the second title won turn-based strategy.

DISCOVERINGGAMES

DISCOVERING GAMES #5

24 HOURS WITH THE SIMS

by Scott McCloud

In preparation for an *onstage talk* with *Will Wright,** I decided to play *The Sims* for *24 straight hours* just to see what would happen.



I set my timer at *6:46 am* on the morning of *February 14th* (we celebrated *Valentine's Day* the day *before*).



I'd recently created a *family* and a *small house* from scratch so I decided to use them.



Killing 'em would be too easy so I chose the much harder challenge of keeping them *happy* and *prosperous.*



9:25 am: Pauline gets through *med school* in a *single day -- good job,* Pauline!



9:50 am: *All* the Sims *love to play* with Poopsie's *dollhouse.* Hmm... Can you say *"fractal"?*



After various *career shifts,* the whole family is getting *to* and *from school* at about the *same time* each day.



The house is forever *expanding.* I'm getting into coordinating *floor* and *wallpaper patterns.* I try not to dwell on what this means.



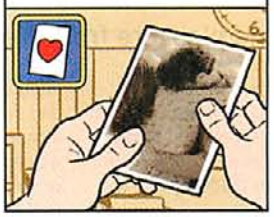
11:50 am: I actually mistook our own ringing *downstairs phone* for the phone in the *game* and nearly *missed a call!*



Have you noticed that the Sims never:

... have weekends?
... walk at a rate of more than 2 feet per minute?
... talk while sitting down?
... pull down their pants on the toilet?
... drive?
... question their existence?

4:10 pm: Ivy's home with the kids. She gives me a *Valentine.* I make a mental note to *fill out* the card I got for *her* while my "other family" is *sleeping.*



We have two discs, so my daughters play The Sims *downstairs,* while I keep playing *upstairs.* Somehow, *their* family has *more money* to spend!



8:30 pm: Mom is at a *rehearsal* so I *pause* to get the kids to *bed.*



(Actual quotes)

9:40 pm: The house is *expanding* by leaps and bounds. I decide that I could afford a *maid* and *gardener too* if I made nearly *$1,000 a day!*



1:50 am: A wondrous moment as all three *whirl into their clothes* simultaneously.



5:46 am: I have to stop one hour short as my *vision* is getting blurry --



-- but I know they'll be *fine.*





*Game Developers Conference, 2002.



UPCOMING

Icewind Dale II

More thwacking pleasure from Black Isle **By Thierry Nguyen**

Gamers wanting some old-school *D&D* kill-fests without the epic sprawl of a *Baldur's Gate* title can snag *Icewind Dale II* come summer. Even though *TORN* fell out, the Black Isle team regrouped and decided to hammer out *Icewind Dale II*.

As expected, they've made a bunch of improvements and additions to both the gameworld and the game engine. New spells include Vipergout, a nasty level-7 conjuration that has the caster spitting out vipers to help the group in combat. One of the items Black Isle let slip to us *CGW* folks is Belib's Everlasting Torch, a big club that not only does 1D6 fire damage but has a chance to do an additional 1D10 fire damage. That's just one of the bajillion new items in store.

Other absolute newness includes the integration of the barbarian, sorcerer, and monk character classes, and the inclusion of character kits from *BG2* as well as all-new ones (such as mercenary or votary). Player race additions include Half-Orc, Drow, Gold Dwarf, and Tiefling, and the usual high-quality character portraits will grace your screen again. The Infinity engine has been further modified and now officially supports 1024x768, one-upping the 800x600 in previous titles. If you're daring, you big-time Drizz't fans with huge monitors can even go all the way to 2048x1536.

Finally, you can't import your characters from the previous game, as *Icewind Dale II* takes place a generation after the events of the previous game. Look for a hands-on preview as soon as we can sharpen our plus-three keyboard skills.



If you're daring, you big-time Drizz't fans with huge monitors can even go all the way to 2048x1536.

GAME STATS

GENRE: **Action-RPG**
RELEASE DATE: **Q2 2002**
PUBLISHER: **Interplay**
DEVELOPER: **Black Isle Studios**
CONTACT: **icewind2.blackisle.com**



EXTENDED PLAY: HOMEBREW

By T. Byrl Baker

Geek Like Me

Computer gamers, considered geeks by most, tend to have other geek passions as well. This month we looked at a couple of programs that incorporate these other pursuits into our favorite hobby.



Bid for Power

www.bidforpower.com

Anime fans, rejoice. The long-awaited *Bid for Power* mod is a total conversion for *Quake III*. It came so close to recreating the *Dragonball Z* universe that the dev team got a cease-and-desist order. They whipped up new graphics to avoid copyright violations, but anyone familiar with *Dragonball Z* or anime in general will feel right at home with this mod.

The six characters don't tote guns but instead rely on Ki energy attacks to defeat opponents. A key charges your Ki; mightier attacks become available as your power increases. The downside is that you become immobile while charging, making you a prime target for other players. The game can be played from third-person or first-person and incorporates melee attacks, flying, and other comic book conventions.

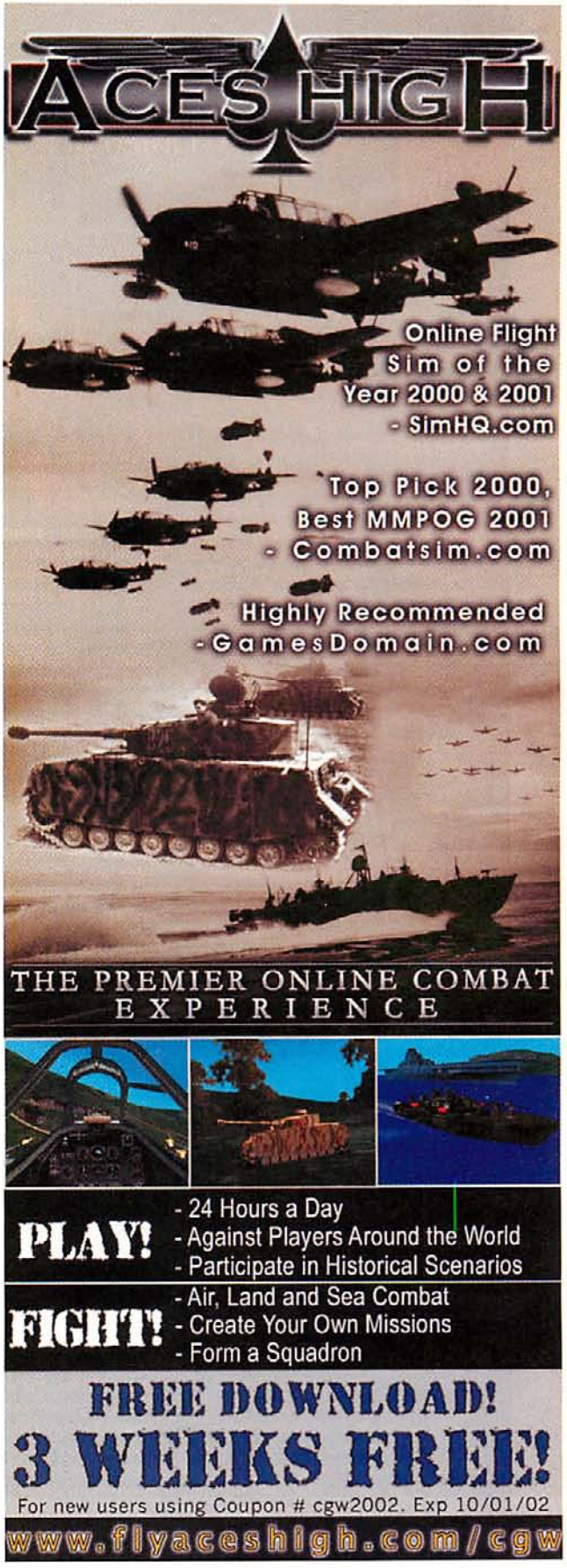


Celestia

www.shatters.net/celestia

Okay, so it isn't a game, but it took so much time away from playing games that it deserves a recommendation. *Celestia* is a navigable 3D map of all the stars, planets, moons, and other objects that normally are constricted to 2D star charts. You can zoom in on any planet and watch as the light from the sun plays off its surface in real time. And the stars you see in the background aren't just for show. You can click any of them to get their name, right-click them to access a Website with more complete information, or simply zoom in for a closer look.

Celestia needs a bear of a system to run smoothly at its max resolution of 1600x1200, but it's quite a sight if you have the right hardware. You can make orbits visible, display constellations, or zoom out for a God's-eye-view of the Milky Way before plunging back in for a narrated trip around the solar system.





PERSPECTIVE: *CGW* DEATHMATCH

Money for Nothing?

Collectible card tycoons Wizards of the Coast will bring their keystone franchise, *Magic: The Gathering*, to the online world later this year. In a break from the monthly flat-fee model, WOTC has announced that they will be bringing their real-world pricing model to the digital version of the game: Instead of a monthly fee, players will purchase virtual booster packs of cards at physical-world prices, $3.50 to $10. Wizards of the Coast senior marketing manager Kyle Murray likes this idea. Editor-in-chief of Gamers.com and big-time *Magic: The Gathering* fan George Jones doesn't. Gentlemen, have at it.



Kyle Murray: *Magic Online* is a great strategy game that has been in development for more than two years. We'll launch with more than 1,500 cards, and we'll release about 600 new cards every year, so strategies will keep evolving. Players will be able to download the base game for free or buy it at retail stores for about $15. The retail version will come with a ready-to-play theme deck, and players can purchase additional card sets and theme decks. We think *Magic* will be the ultimate online competition.

George Jones: I love *Magic: The Gathering*, but I don't think I'll play after the beta if I have to pay individually for cards. While I suppose fans of the original card game—who are used to paying on a per-deck basis—will play online, it seems like Wizards is missing out on a big opportunity to bring in new players.

KM: We considered a flat subscription fee, but if you start with all the cards, you lose the fun and challenge of building your arsenal of weapons. It'd be like starting off in an MMORPG at level 100. Unlike games that are subscription based, how much you spend in *Magic Online* is up to you.

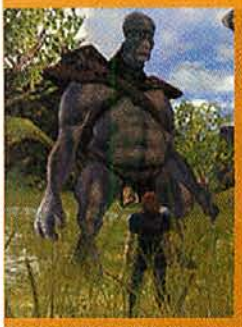
GJ: Your comparison to an MMORPG is interesting. In a game like *EverQuest*, you can't start off at level 100 with a full arsenal of weapons, and you shouldn't be able to start *MO* with all the cards. With a per-card pricing structure, players who can spend a lot of cash up front will be able to play *MO* with an advantage not related to skill. If the notion of getting rewarded for play gets subverted, gamers will quickly tire of the experience.

KM: You'll be able to win additional cards by playing well. In leagues and in the most popular tournaments, everyone starts off with the same number of random cards, which negates any advantage to spending more money. The best strategists will win. While some would rather do an auto-withdrawal that charges you whether you play or not, we want to give players as much control as possible. You might decide you want to trade for new cards this month or that you'd rather play with the cards you have.

GJ: Giving players control is a key issue, but it seems that the pay-per model will ultimately weaken my control. Every time I have to make a decision to buy cards, I'll feel more pressure. And every time I lose to someone, I'll wonder if it's because they're a better player or because they just bought better cards. Why not have a model where as you win games, you gain points, and as you gain points, you level up? Then as you level up, you can "purchase" new cards.

KM: Anyone who has played will tell you that *Magic* is a challenging strategy game. For new players we'll have tutorials, beginner rooms, moderators, and tournaments and prizes. For those who like organized competition, *MO* will have lots to offer, from beginner tournaments using ready-to-play theme decks to 500-plus person tournaments. But you don't have to enter tournaments or have many cards to enjoy designing original decks and competing with friends. *Magic*'s innovative gameplay will revolutionize online gaming.

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY



THE GOOD
MICROSOFT'S PC GAMES

It's not all about Xbox—well, not yet at least. At their self-proclaimed "International Games Festival" in Vegas, Microsoft previewed their 2002 PC game lineup, and it looked pretty dang good. *Age of Mythology* looked fantastic, as did *Freelancer* and *Asheron's Call 2*, and Brian Reynolds' just-announced *Rise of Nations* showed potential as a real-time *Civ III* strat game. But where's *Halo*?

THE BAD
KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC—XBOX FIRST



On the other hand, the Xbox reared its annoying green head when Bioware announced that *Knights of the Old Republic*, their *Star Wars*-based RPG, would come out on the console this December, while it won't come out on the PC until sometime in late 2003. Yeah, whatever. Talk to the hand. Maybe we'll get to play it sometime after *Halo* comes out.



THE UGLY
WHINY GAME DEVELOPERS

We don't get it. We get a bad game in the mail, we give it a bad review, and then the developers get mad at US for calling them on it. Here's the thing, though: It's not our fault. We didn't make the game. YOU did. We like games here. We love games. We want to play them all day long. So all you have to do is make a good one—we'll be happy, and we'll say nice things. It's that simple.



UPDATE

The Idiot's Guide to Being Boba Fett

It's like "The Most Dangerous Game" but with Wookies By Thierry Nguyen

Don't think that you can saunter into the gameworld and just pick the profession of bounty hunter as a mere newbie. Like the other cool professions, you have to earn your Mandalorian battle armor. The path of being Boba Fett Jr. requires some skill in both combat and investigation; you have to know how to look for your bounty, and then how to aggressively bring the perp in. Once you've obtained a modicum of experience in those two skills, you can actually invest skill points in bounty hunting itself. Then you can join the Bounty Hunter's Guild, which has perks like specialized training and Wookiee hair nets.



According to our resident *Star Wars Galaxies* Holocron, producer Haden Blackman, "Players who become bounty hunters will have access to special bounty hunter missions. Initially, bounty hunters will be pursuing NPCs, but as they advance, their quarry will grow to include other players."

Yes, bounties can be slapped onto you if you, for example, fail a mission for Jabba the Hutt (you might get carbon-frozen), play a Jedi who's been spotted by the Emperor, or play a crazy murderer who goes around killing neutral players. You'll be able to re-enact some of the Jedi bounty hunter fight scenes that we hear will make *Episode II* very cool. Heck, if there's a bounty on your head and a player hasn't accepted it, an NPC like Boba Fett or IG-88 might be commissioned to go after you; they have a zealous appetite for Jedi in particular. Life kinda sucks for you at that point.

All in all, *Star Wars Galaxies* will have a lot to offer for burgeoning Fett wannabes.

COMING NEXT MONTH

We'll be running the definitive, in-depth story on *Star Wars Galaxies* in our June issue. We'll take you behind the scenes for the world's first hands-on look at this landmark game, and you won't find this info anywhere else (not even www.ultimateswgfansitesupreme.com). *CGW*, *Star Wars Galaxies*, and *Attack of the Clones*, all next month. It's a good time to dig up that musty stormtrooper outfit.

GET A LIFE

Four suggestions for drowning out the existential hum



Cleanliness

We don't know if it's really next to godliness, but we were amazed how a little soap and water got rid of that rancid smell and what we thought were unsightly scabs. Whew—talk about relief! Follow Jeff Green's example and bathe at least twice a week—you might even get some friends. Never mind, who are we kidding?



Jack the Ripper Walking Tours

If you're in London, you've got to go on the Ripping Yarns nighttime Jack the Ripper tour. It's remarkable how little most of the Whitechapel murder sites have changed since Saucy Jack ran amok. Call 7488.2414 when in London and go for a walk on the blood-soaked side.



Iron Chef

Check out the Chairman as he hosts his final season of the original Japanese fave. Watch chefs battle head to head in Kitchen Stadium, slicing and dicing up secret ingredients that range from sweetfish to bamboo shoots to milk. Celebrity judges, voice-overs, vegetable squashing—who could ask for more?

Netflix

Renting DVDs through the mail has swept through our office because of the beauty that is Netflix.com. With no late fees, cheap monthly plans, and a huge selection, Netflix lets you finally rent *Legends of the Fall* without having to endure the embarrassment of walking out of Blockbuster alone with it.



Jazz and Faust could go down as one of the most dazzling adventure games ever produced—look at how realistically the shadows of the tree play upon the house.

UPDATE

Foreign Aid

The adventure genre gets a boost from faraway friends By Rob Smolka

The American-made adventure game is fast becoming a relic of the past, but there's still plenty of support coming from the rest of the world. We've recently received some information on two upcoming games that may even reinvigorate the love we once had on our shores for the lost art of pointing and clicking.

Due to hit store shelves in May, *Syberia* is the name of the latest mind-bending offering from European comic book writer Benoit Sokal, the man who gave us the thoroughly bizarre adventure game *Amerzone* a few years back. Developed and published in conjunction with Montreal-based Microids, *Syberia* casts you as Kathe Walker, a New York lawyer who is sent by her company to complete the purchase of an automaton factory. As so often happens, things go awry upon her arrival, sending Kathe (and you) on a whirlwind tour of intrigue and puzzle solving. The story, filled with missing heirs, helpful automatons, and odd environments, looks to be just as peculiar as Sokal's last interactive tale. Gameplay appears to be of the standard third-person variety, filled with plenty of interaction with the locals and puzzles that arise naturally from the story. Oh, and did we mention how great everything looks?

Jazz and Faust, due sometime in the second quarter from Russian publisher 1C, plays more like classic LucasArts and Sierra titles, wherein you see your 3D character onscreen. As the name implies, there are two protagonists, and essentially, it's two games for the price of one. While this isn't the first title to try this scheme—DreamCatcher Interactive recently tried something similar with the execrable *Arthur's Knights: Tales of Chivalry*—if the gameplay turns out as we hope, it'll be a real treat to play through with the second character, as the two do meet during each other's stories.

You can explore this stunning world as either the smuggler Jazz or the sea captain Faust; either way, your goal is to find a lost treasure hoard. Along the way, you'll encounter more than 50 characters to interact with and more than 80 areas to explore, encompassing such settings as a desert with markets, ghost towns, and caravans; a seacoast filled with taverns (and the undesirables such places tend to attract); and a trade route out at sea.



PERSPECTIVE: POST-MORTEM

By Bruce Geryk

Falcon 4.0

A lot of people may not realize it, but flight sims are essentially role-playing games. The same aspects of world building that are so important in making a good RPG are the ones that can make or break a flight simulator. The difference is that they don't have to be part of the actual game.

I remember playing *Microsoft Flight Simulator 1.0*. The terrain consisted of a bunch of straight lines that looked like they were from the movie *Tron*. I played the first version of *Falcon* on a Macintosh Plus, and while I never did figure out what all the lines meant, and I don't think I ever successfully hit a target of any kind, the feeling was unmistakable: I was simulating flying a very complex fighter aircraft.

This feeling of actually doing something was what set flight sims apart and once made them the most popular genre of computer game—they took the novel approach of making a computer actually simulate a real-world activity. Eventually, however, flight sims lost this edge, because while *Medal of Honor* may not be an actual simulation of killing Nazis, it is one in every way that's important. So what do present-day flight sims have to offer jaded gamers? Good graphics? Flight sims still have something that other games don't: manuals.

When I saw *Falcon 4.0*, I immediately knew I had to have it: The game box was a giant manual. It didn't matter what was in there—before I installed it, I imagined that the huge manual had all the information necessary to make me a fighter pilot. I even bought a technical book on air combat. *Falcon 4.0* restored flight sims to the place they had held before 1990: as tools that advance your skills in ways not possible without a computer.

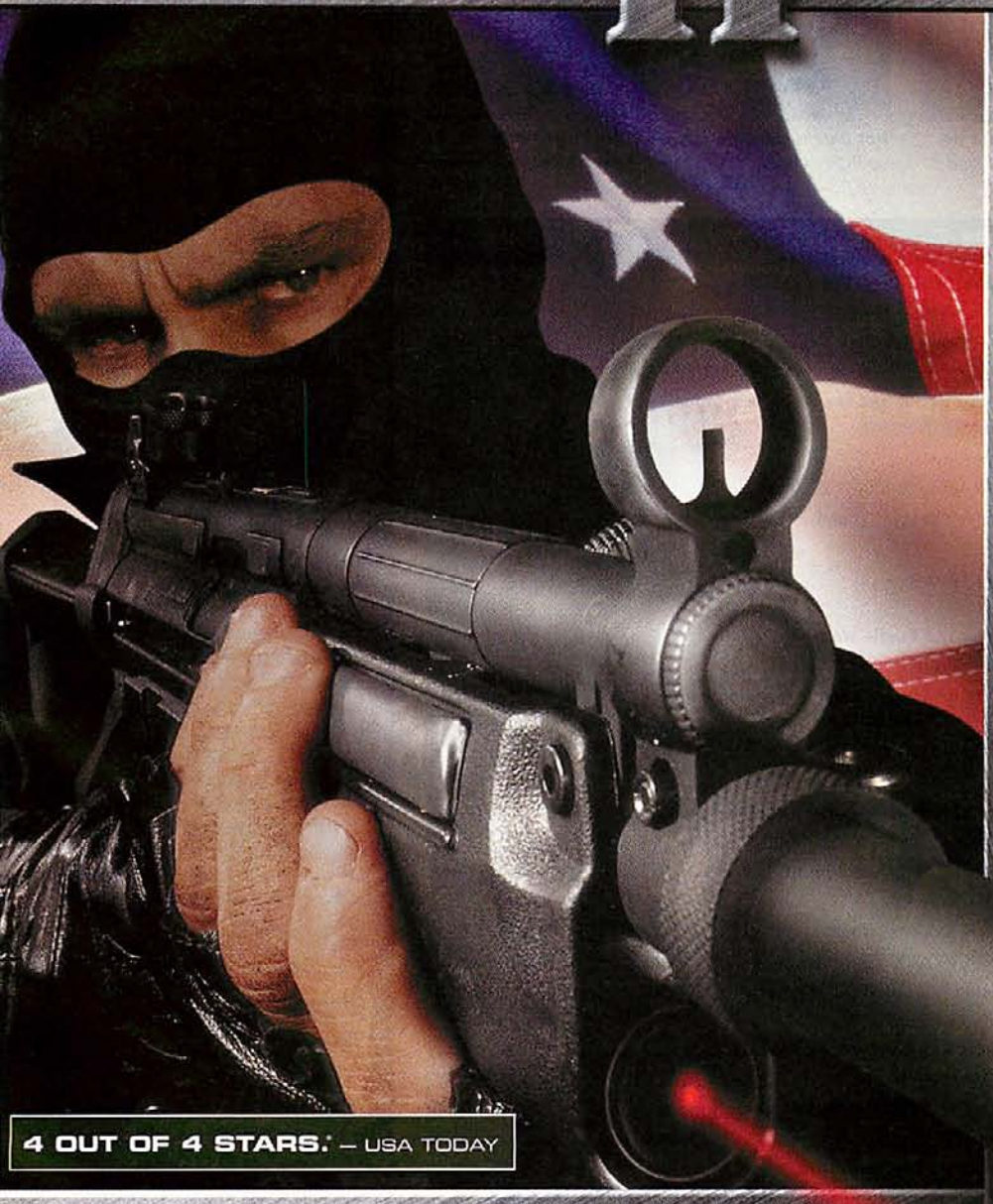
Falcon 4.0 is an outstanding game once you apply all of the official and user-created patches. But what sets it apart is the mystique that it pushes the boundaries of what is possible to include in a computer game. *Jane's F/A-18* had avionics almost as complex as those in *F4*, but the lack of a dynamic campaign made it seem less serious than *F4*, which was billed as "the new benchmark in flight sim technology." Since few gamers know from firsthand experience what a realistic F-16 flight model is, a lot depends on perception—which is just what a game billed as "the new benchmark in flight sim technology" is supposed to deliver.



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DOUBLE HELIX



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RAVEN

CREATIVE EAX ADVANCED HD

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Blood and Gore Violence

ACTIVISION.

activision.com

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RANKINGS

CGW Top 20

Lt. Mike Powell sends Harry Potter back to the closet under the stairs



Prepare yourself for the invasion of *MOH Allied Assault.*



Hot Date is still steaming up PC monitors.



Harry Potter embodies preteen consumer power.

Rank	Last Month	Game	Rating
1	–	Medal of Honor Allied Assault ($50, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
2	2	The Sims: Hot Date Expansion Pack ($27, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
3	1	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone ($28, Electronic Arts)	★★★½☆
4	3	The Sims ($40, Electronic Arts)	★★★★★
5	4	Roller Coaster Tycoon ($21, Infogrames)	★★★★☆
6	8	Zoo Tycoon ($28, Microsoft)	★★★½☆
7	7	Return to Castle Wolfenstein ($57, Activision)	★★★½☆
8	13	The Sims: Livin' Large Expansion Pack ($27, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
9	14	Empire Earth ($48, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★☆
10	12	The Sims: House Party Expansion Pack ($28, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
11	11	Sid Meier's Civilization III ($45, Infogrames)	★★★★★
12	6	Backyard Basketball ($18, Infogrames)	NR
13	–	Diablo II: Lord of Destruction ($40, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★½
14	15	Roller Coaster Tycoon Loopy Landscapes Expansion Pack ($19, Infogrames)	★★★★☆
15	18	SimCity 3000 Unlimited ($28, Electronic Arts)	★★★½☆
16	10	Backyard Football 2002 ($18, Infogrames)	★★★★☆
17	–	Hoyle Casino 2002 ($30, Vivendi Universal)	NR
18	–	Age of Empires II: Age of Kings ($35, Microsoft)	★★★★★
19	–	Combat Flight Simulator ($55, Microsoft)	★★★★☆
20	–	Ghost Recon ($50, Ubi Soft)	★★★½☆

JANUARY RETAIL SALES RESULTS BY NPD INTELECT

NOTABLE QUOTE

"We're seriously feeling like the ugly stepchild here, but that's just motivating us more. All the noise here is about Xbox now."
–anonymous Microsoft Game Group executive

5, 10, 15 YEARS AGO IN *CGW*

Five Years Ago, May 1997



In retrospect, it's amazing we even put out this issue. This *was* the year that *Diablo, Civ II,* and *Quake* all came out. Between those games, the occasional snack, and our weekly potty break, our time was pretty well tied up. All were recognized in this issue's Game of the Year feature, with *Diablo* seizing top honors, while *Quake* grabbed the Action Game title and *Civ II* took the Strategy honors. Gaming life was good indeed in 1997.

Ten Years Ago, May 1992



The most amazing thing about this issue is it didn't come bundled with a *CGW* pocket protector. Man alive, has there ever been a magazine cover that proclaimed, "I am dork, hear me roar" more loudly? Look at the darn thing. A couple of Teutonic warriors including one with comic book-sized breasts, "The Castle of Dr. Brain" in big white type across the bottom, and a nifty little corner banner proudly extolling *CGW* as "The Magazine of Interactive Entertainment" (a trademarked phrase to boot). Ten years ago, buying *CGW* cost you just $3.95–and any hope of normal human socialization.

Fifteen Years Ago, May 1987



All you readers who've been telling us *CGW* has gone to hell may be right. But there was a time when we were closer to God: Right there, hidden in the masthead above our Compuserve address and phone numbers was "Psalm 9:1-2." It was a reference to living one's life in an attitude of thankfulness. Nowadays, the editorial gallery of convicts live their lives in an attitude of bitterness. If you read Green-speak backwards you can find subliminal satanic messages.



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- Acquire and carry weapons and tools from mission to mission through an enhanced inventory and save-game system.

MARCH 2002

Hitman2.com

HITMAN 2™

SILENT ASSASSIN

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Strong Sexual Content
Violence

IO Interactive

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PIPELINE

Our latest guesses about when those games are finally shipping


1


2


3


4

Estimating software release dates is like trying to predict the next insulting nickname we'll give our intern. These dates represent the best available info we had at press time. If you're a publisher, send us your updates at cgwletters@ziffdavis.com.

1 COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE This month, you'll find our review of *Renegade*, but Westwood is still creating content. Available for download are two new multiplayer maps "that will allow players to control air-based vehicles from the original *Command & Conquer*." Perhaps Westwood should have concentrated on making the actual game better before adding to it, but we'll let you decide which you prefer.

2 WARLORDS BATTLECRY II This addition to the long-standing *Warlords* line of fantasy games should be in stores by the time you read this. *Warlords Battlecry*, the RTS spin-off of the main line, just had its sequel go gold. Give it a try with the demo on our disc this month.

3 STAR TREK BRIDGE COMMANDER Activision's next effort at making a successful *Trek* game has gone gold and is in stores. There's certainly more enthusiasm for this effort than usually surrounds a *Trek* game release. Despite its weak showing at E3, this game has an immersive design concept and some novel ideas. But we'll wait to see if it can break the curse of abysmal *Star Trek* games.

4 X-COM ALLIANCE More than a year ago, we reported that *X-Com Alliance* was being put on indefinite hold. Then a new Web page for the game recently popped up at Infogrames. Diehard fans rejoiced. But the game is really still on hold. Infogrames stated that it "must have been some kind of accident." The page now just redirets you back to the main Infogrames page.

GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
Age of Mythology	Microsoft	Sept 2002
Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne	Take Two	Spring 2002
Arx Fatalis	Fishtank Interactive	Summer 2002
Asheron's Call 2	Microsoft	Winter 2002
Beam Breakers	Fishtank Interactive	Summer 2002
Bonestorm	Okama	Summer 2005
Call of Cthulhu	Fishtank Interactive	Summer 2002
Casino Empire	Sierra	Fall 2002
Chaser	Fishtank Interactive	Winter 2002
Combat Mission 2: Barbarossa to Berlin	Big Time Software	Summer 2002
Commander Jill	Stardock	Spring 2002
Conseal	JoWood	Spring 2002
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Sierra	Fall 2002
Deus Ex 2	Eidos	Winter 2002
Doom 3	id software	We'll see
Dragon Empires	Codemasters	Spring 2002
Dragon's Lair 3D	Blue Byte	On hold
Dragon Throne: The Battle of Red Cliffs	Strategy First	Summer 2002
Duke Nukem Forever	3D Realms	Spring 2002
Dungeon Siege	Microsoft	April 2002
Earth and Beyond	Westwood	Spring 2002
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Bethesda	Summer 2002
Emperor: Rise of the Middle Kingdom	Sierra	Fall 2002
Far West	JoWood	Spring 2002

GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
Freedom Force	EA	Spring 2002
FUEL	DreamCatcher	Fall 2002
Galactic Civilizations	Stardock	Fall 2002
Global Operations	Crave	Spring 2002
Gore	DreamCatcher	Spring 2002
Grand Theft Auto III	Rockstar Games	Summer 2002
Halo	Microsoft	Summer 2002
Heroes of Might and Magic IV	3DO	March 2002
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Take Two	Spring 2002
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Spring 2002
Hotel Tycoon	JoWood	Spring 2002
Icewind Dale II	Interplay	May 2002
Imperium Galactica 3: Genesis	CDV	Spring 2002
Impossible Creatures	Microsoft	Summer 2002
Industry Tycoon 2	JoWood	Spring 2002
Legends of Loch Ness	DreamCatcher	Spring 2002
Lineage 2	Destination Games	Spring 2003
Lock On: Modern Air Combat	Ubi Soft	Spring 2002
Master of Orion III	Infogrames	Spring 2002
Medieval: Total War	Activision	Summer 2002
Midgard	Funcom	On hold
Might and Magic IX: Writ of Fate	3DO	Summer 2002
Natural Resistance	JoWood	Spring 2002
Neocron	CDV	Spring 2002
Neverwinter Nights	Infogrames	Summer 2002
Nexagon: The Pit	Strategy First	Spring 2002
NOLF 2	Sierra	Fall 2002
Outcast II: The Lost Paradise	No publisher yet	Winter 2002

GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
Planetside	Sony Online Ent.	Fall 2002
Project IGI 2	Codemasters	Summer 2002
Project Earth	DreamCatcher	Spring 2002
Quake IV	Activision	Someday
Reality Deathmatch	JoWood	Spring 2002
Republic: The Revolution	Eidos	Summer 2002
Shadowbane	Ubi Soft	Spring 2002
SimCity 4	EA	Winter 2002
The Sims Online	EA	Summer 2002
Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix	Activision	May 2002
Sovereign	Sony Online Ent.	Someday
Spring Break	Eidos	Spring 2002
Star Trek: Bridge Commander	Activision	March 2002
Star Wars Galaxies	LucasArts	Winter 2002
Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	March 2002
Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic	LucasArts	Fall 2003
Superpower	DreamCatcher	Spring 2002
SWAT: Urban Justice	Sierra	Sept 2002
Tabula Rasa	Destination Games	Summer 2003
Team Fortress 2	Sierra	Spring 2003
Thief III	Eidos	Winter 2002
UFO: Freedom Ridge	Virgin Interactive	Holiday 2002
Unreal II	Infogrames	Spring 2002
WarCraft III	Blizzard	Spring 2002
Warlords IV	Ubi Soft	Summer 2002
Warlords Battlecry II	Ubi Soft	March 2002
World of WarCraft	Blizzard	Eventually

NEW UPDATE

"flat out gorgeous."

-IGN







AGE OF WONDERS II

THE WIZARD'S THRONE

TRIUMPH STUDIOS

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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www.ageofwonders.com

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-gamespot.com

"...I will be playing for a long, long time to come."
-ign.com

"Wow...a new contender for the crown of king of the massively multiplayer RPG's." -Computer Gaming World

"WARNING: This game will SUCK your life away!"
-gamespy.com

"4.5 Fun Factor ...its **incredible** quality level make it a shining star in the MMORPG sky." -gamepro.com

"Looks capable of **unseating Everquest** as the MMORPG **king!**" -computergamers.com

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Illustration by Terese Nielsen
www.tnielsen.com

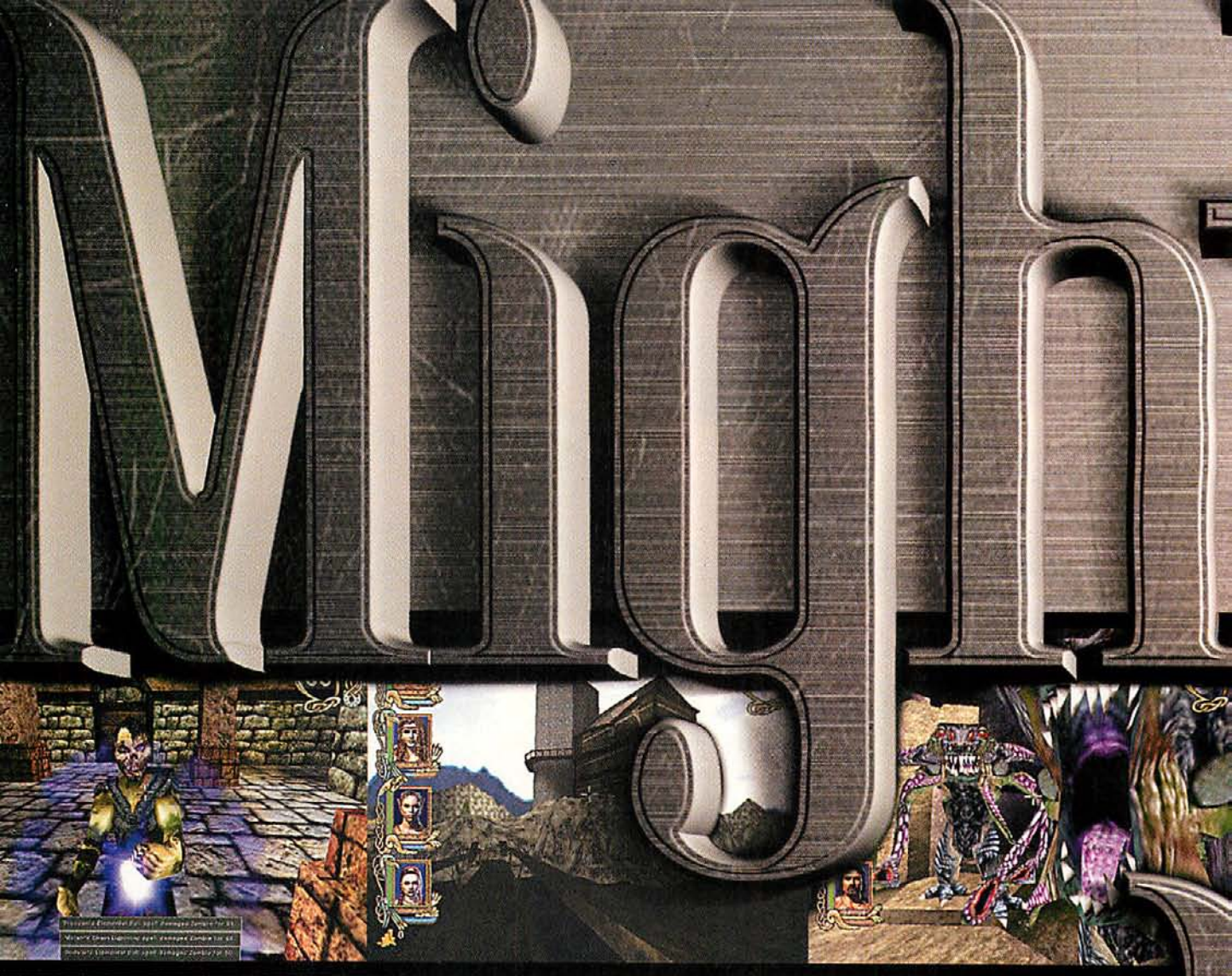
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The cities are enormous but easily navigated thanks to a very friendly interface.



Mining asteroids for valuable minerals is a quick way to make a little money early in the game.



More than two hours of story-packed cut-scenes drive *Freelancer*'s plot.

FREELANCER

The future of space sims isn't a space sim By Robert Coffey

Digital Anvil has a simple request for you: Throw away your preconceptions about space combat games. Forget the strictly linear play, discard the sterile militaristic dystopic future, toss your joystick in the trash. Digital Anvil and *Freelancer* have some big goals: to be *Diablo* in space; to create the most addictive, most accessible space game ever; and to revitalize a withering genre. Nothing too ambitious.

Freelancer occurs in what the designers refer to as "The Living Universe." It pervades every aspect of *Freelancer*'s gameplay, from the distant swirling nebulae that grow larger and more detailed as you travel closer to them, to a random mission engine that gives each of the 1,200 or so NPCs in the game their own stories, prejudices, and desires that shape their interactions with you, the player. So much of the game is in the smallest details: Pull up to a huge space station and you'll hear dynamically generated air traffic control discussing whatever happens to be docking or launching at that moment. When you experience this in action, the effect is remarkable, ratcheting up believability and immersion.

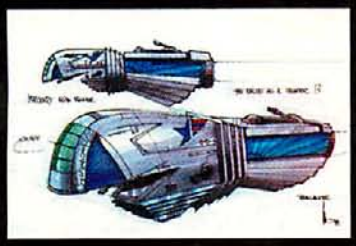
Freelancer plays unlike any other space sim. For starters, you drive with a mouse, not a joystick. Your ship will automatically pilot itself, following nav points to complete missions or performing a variety of maneuvers in combat. Unlike traditional space games, which frequently play like a shooter in a 3D arena, *Freelancer* has a much more tactical feel. You simply click on the maneuver you want your ship to perform, target your enemy with your mouse cursor, and fire away. Freed of direct piloting chores, I found myself making strategic decisions in combat: Which enemy subsystem do I target, how is my power being managed, which weapons should I be using? It was much more engaging than the de rigueur furballs of even the best space games. And should you so desire, you can override the automatic pilot and steer yourself.

The autopiloting and mouse use are just two great examples of how the *Freelancer* team is focusing on making their game accessible to an audience greater than that of *StarLancer* or *Freespace 2*. You can target enemies in the main view window or just click on them in your radar. The interface negates pointless wandering—if you want to go to the bar, click the Go to Bar button instead of knocking on every door on a planet until you find the damn bar. A "story star" will pop up whenever a story mission is triggered, giving you the option to click on it and dive in or to wait until after a few more random missions.

As much as Digital Anvil is following a loose *Diablo II* model, they are breaking from it in one significant aspect: story. *Freelancer* will feature more than two hours of epic cut-scenes, but the effect of the story and your actions are so much more than just cut-scene material. Because it's a living universe, you can wipe out a pirate base (since the pirates aren't just random monsters, they actually have to live somewhere) and make a portion of space safe for good. Further, as you complete story missions, the climate of the universe shifts, alliances are forged and shattered, and you have to react to your changing role in the grand scheme of things.

And when you've played through the story of mankind resettling a new and distant part of space and it's all over? You can keep playing. You can explore the 30-plus space systems (out of 50) that the story didn't take you through. You can spend more time on the beautiful worlds, continue to upgrade your ship, keep running escort and bounty hunter missions. The world keeps living even when the story dies.

More than two years ago, *CGW* put *Freelancer* on the cover and declared it one of the five games that will change gaming. We still believe it—and, more important, so does Digital Anvil.





Details in early sketches are only enhanced in the final ship models.



The sense of scale in *Freelancer* is enormous. Your ship is dwarfed by this docked midsize freighter, which in turn is dwarfed by the mammoth space station.



Space systems in *Freelancer* are so gorgeous it hurts.



You'll need to disengage the autopilot to blast and pick your way through this debris field.



The terribly efficient ship interface never gets in the way of the view.



Autopilot makes docking at this space station easy, but you can try it manually if you really want to.



That brilliant sun isn't just window dressing for this star system—move a few systems closer and it will burn proportionally brighter.

GAME STATS

GENRE: Space simulation
RELEASE DATE: Q4 2002
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Digital Anvil

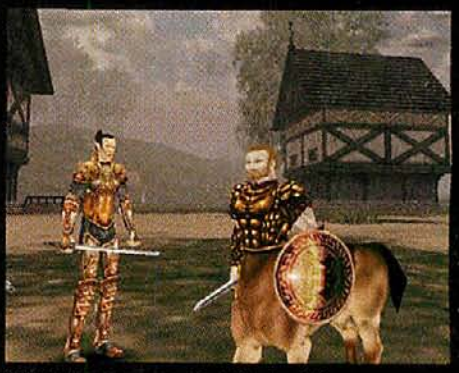




Battles with NPC monsters are still a common occurrence in *Shadowbane*–but just one way to play. Note the inset minimap (finally).



Two fellow guild members chat in the open air. Each guild will have a unique crest, which you can see here near each player's name.



"What do you mean, 'Do I like hay?'"

GAME STATS

GENRE: MMORPG
RELEASE DATE: Q2 2002
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft DEVELOPER: Wolfpack Studios
CONTACT: www.shadowbane.ubisoft.com

SHADOWBANE

Online gaming's ambitious dark horizon

By Jeff Green



Shadowbane's 3D engine is looking very strong, even in the beta test. Amazingly, by launch time the game will be playable on PC, Mac, and UNIX.

To quote Huey Lewis for the first and last time ever: We want a new drug. Those of us who are hooked on massively multiplayer online RPGs like *Ultima Online* or *EverQuest* have already discovered that they're essentially all alike. Even the best of the second wave of MMORPGs, like *Dark Age of Camelot* and *Anarchy Online* (after the first 1,000 patches) devolve into "level treadmills," an endless loop of killing stuff so you can level up to kill bigger stuff.

But *Shadowbane* is different. If Wolfpack Studios delivers on the promises of this highly ambitious online game, which sounds as much like a strategy game as an RPG, then gamers might finally experience what others have so far failed to offer: a massively multiplayer game with a society that changes and evolves, in which gamers will ally with and fight one another, conquer and build cities, and acquire real power to lord over others.

Shadowbane's essential conceit is the simulation of a feudal society. When you enter the game, you are a landless, unaffiliated, powerless newbie. At this point, the game won't look much different than other fantasy-based online RPGs. You create a character by picking a race (including the standard Humans, Elves, Dwarves, and more) and a base class (fighter, healer, mage, or rogue) and assigning points to modify your basic stats. You can take this character out into designated newbie areas and bash on NPC monsters to level up. So far, nothing new.

It's when you enter the gameworld proper that things get interesting, most so in the fact that other players can kill you. Yep, outside of the newbie areas, it's all player-versus-player. Wolfpack wants to create a real world here, with all the inherent dangers and consequences. But keep reading. Don't let that scare you off. As in real life, it is the very threat of danger that will drive players together to create both the game's societies and economic system.

You want revenge against the jerk who killed you? You'll have recourse.

Shadowbane aspires to be an MMO that changes and evolves.

Once out of *Shadowbane*'s safe zones, you'll find a world inhabited by guilds. Not casual guilds in the *EQ* sense, but actual in-game towns and city-states, complete with a functioning government composed of real players and player-constructed buildings.

Let's say you get whacked. The person who killed you won't vanish anonymously—they'll show up on your own death list, which keeps track of your last 10 murderers. And say there's a local guild actively recruiting new players, because even newbies can hunt and kill things and grow the local economy. Join that guild, and now you have an entire city of players ready to kill for you. Guild leaders can even flag an enemy player to be killed on sight by the cities' NPC guards, should he dare get close again.

Guilds are not static, nor are they all alike. Players can create democracies (all members have an equal voice), republics (with an electable inner council), oligarchies (an inner council answerable to no one), and monarchies (one guy in charge). All players ultimately have the power to create or participate in any of these types of guilds, and guilds will ally and fight each other in an attempt to control the world. Chaos? Civilized order? Dictatorships? It's going to be the players (along with the game's designers, who will monitor all and keep adding content and events) who decide.

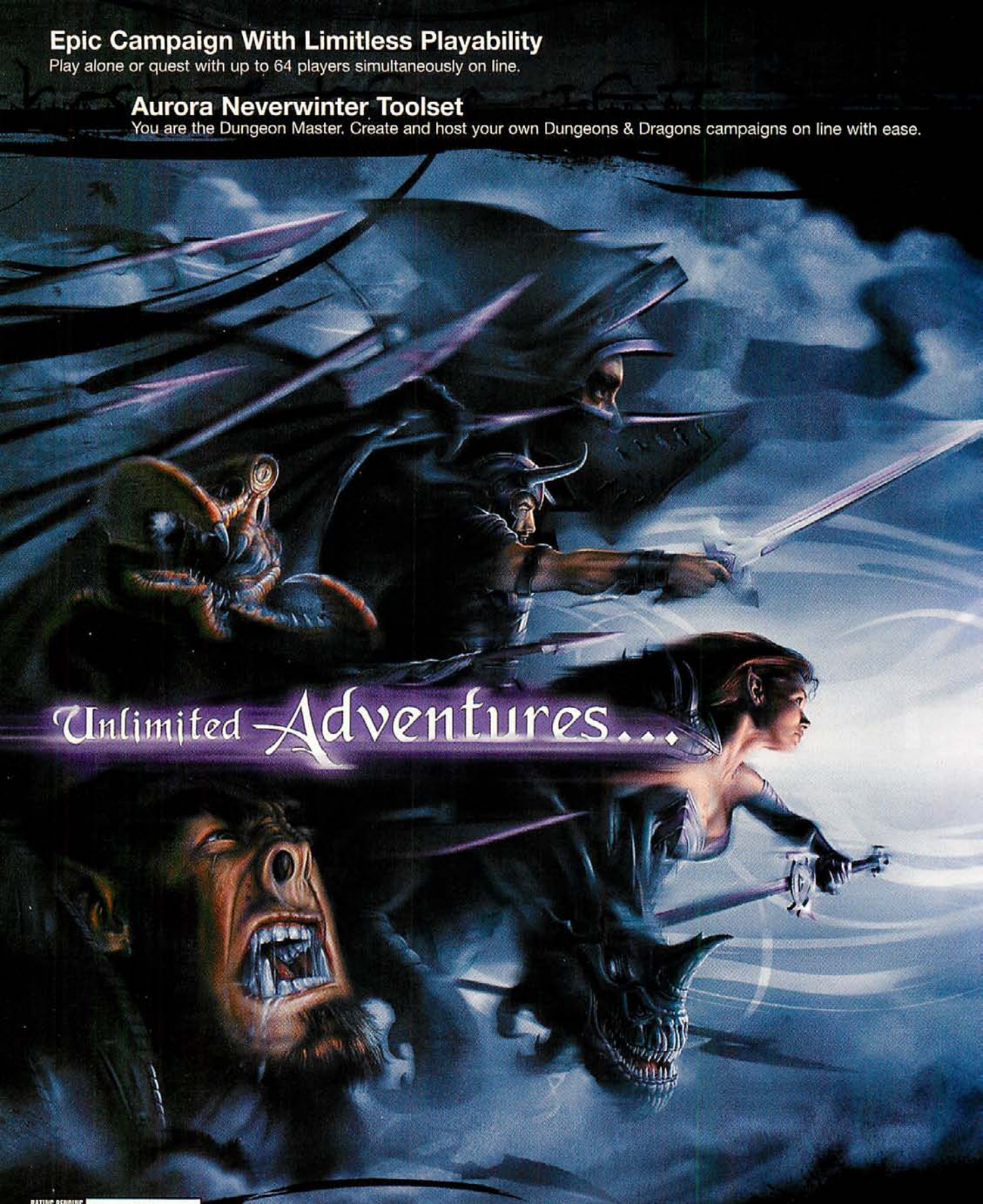
This is just the tip of the iceberg. Look at the screens, and check out the official site. The buzz is huge, and for good reason. Tired of fighting rats and goblins? Tired of being on that level treadmill? *Shadowbane* is promising a real alternative. What remains to be seen is if Wolfpack is talented enough to pull it off, and if gamers are brave enough to play.

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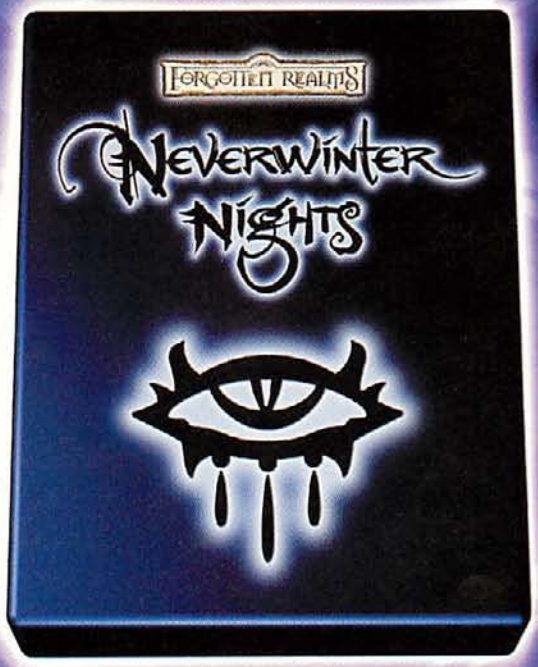
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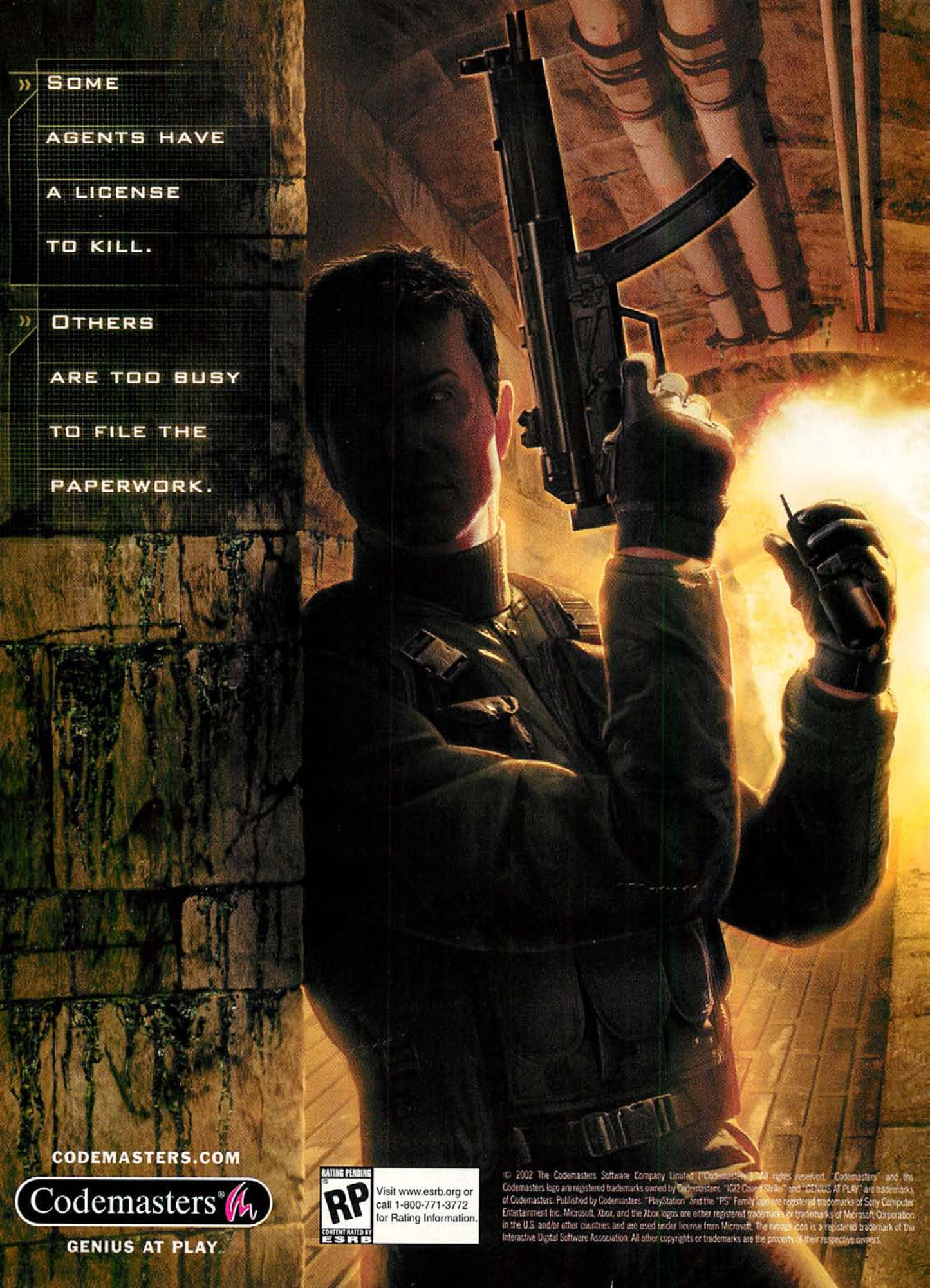
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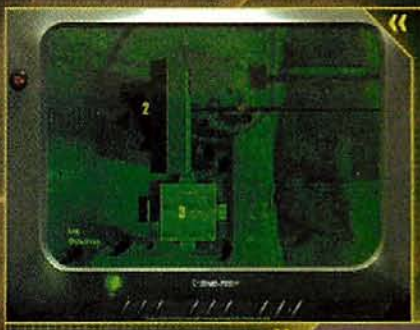




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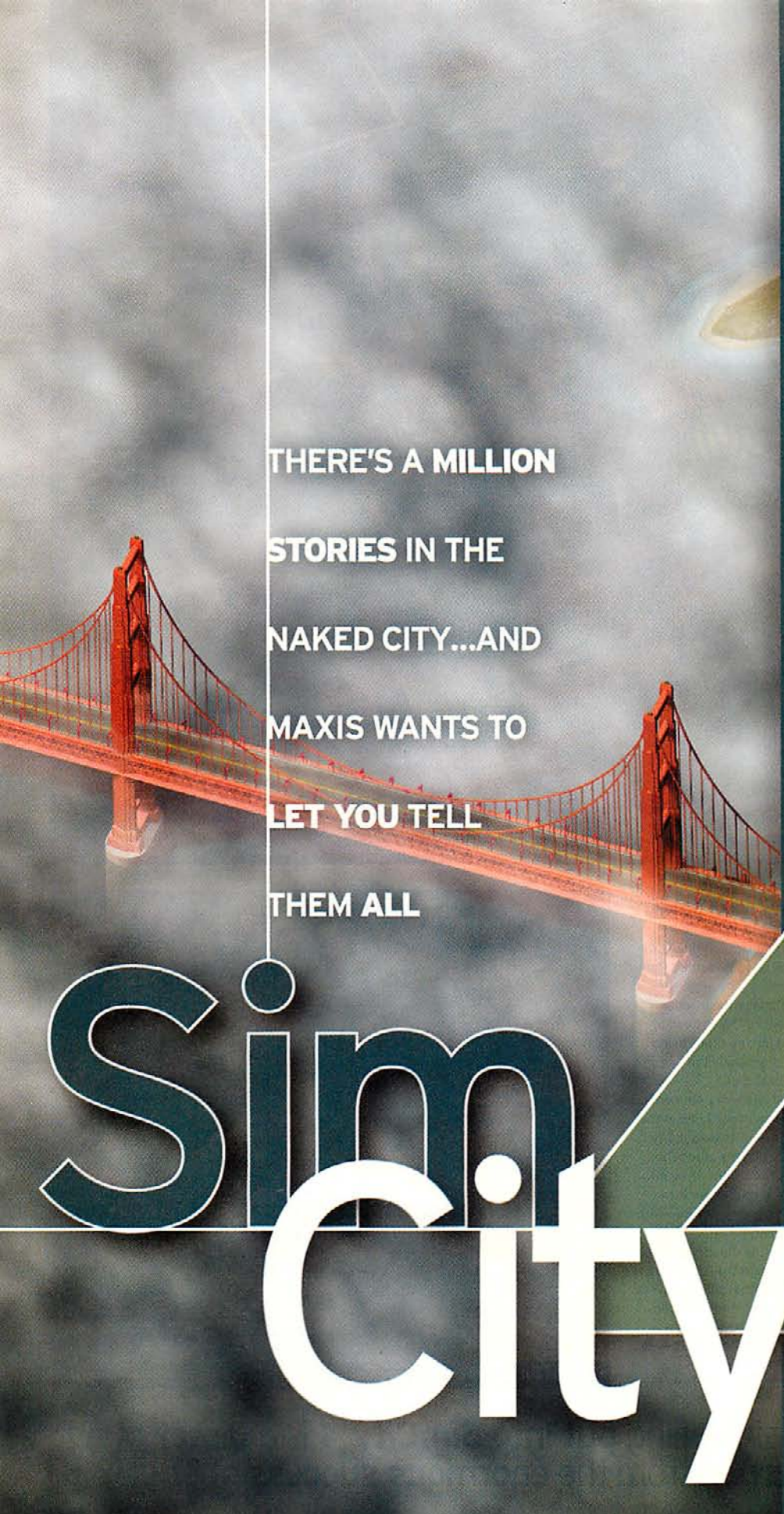
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PC CD ROM



BY ROBERT COFFEY



THERE'S A MILLION STORIES IN THE NAKED CITY...AND MAXIS WANTS TO LET YOU TELL THEM ALL

SimCity 4

IT'S THE FOUNDATION, THE CORNERSTONE, the franchise player of Maxis. Forget about all the profits and all the add-ons and all the popularity of *The Sims*–without *SimCity* there is no Maxis. Simple as that. It's the game that built the company, but in all the *Sims* mania, it has been forgotten by everyone.

Well, not everyone. Not Maxis. Not the passionately dedicated team who's been silently toiling away for more than a year reinventing the Maxis flagship. It's the biggest, the deepest, the most accessible *SimCity* yet, a game so huge that Maxis just couldn't keep the secret until the planned unveiling at E3.

And once we got in the loop, we had to share the news about one of the truly legendary franchises in PC gaming and where it's headed.

Reward objects like the state fair don't just look cool—they directly affect the behavior of your citizens.

Everything I Know About Gaming I Learned From Bella Goth

So much of what is being put into *SimCity 4* is a direct result of lessons learned from the enormous success of *The Sims*. No, you won't have to manage the bladder emergencies of an entire city. Instead of minutiae, it's the big picture that's being influenced by what is arguably the ultimate "small picture" game.

First and foremost are story elements. People have always mentally filled in the blanks to tell the story of their *SimCity* cities, the same way players glued the disparate events of their Sims' lives into a narrative. *SimCity 4* addresses the easy part of this: The game will ship with a *Sims*-style photo album feature and will let players share the albums online. But how do you replicate the *Sims*-type emotional attachment that prods players into playing for hours on end? How do you get players to make as intense a connection to an artificial city as they do to artificial people?

The design team of *SimCity 4* feels this



Leisurely drifting clouds and an animated coastline add to a city's sense of life.

So much of what is being **put into *SimCity 4*** is a **direct result of lessons learned** from the **enormous success** of *The Sims*.

is accomplished by recognizing the driving force of players' personal goals and giving them the opportunity and tools to create their own experience. So out go the traditional strategy game scenarios, and in comes a whole bushel of imaginary carrots dangling at the end of a metaphoric stick to lead gamers further and further into what is a remarkably sophisticated simulation.

Instead of charging players with, say, trying to recover from a natural disaster in X number of years, *SimCity 4* puts us in pursuit of more tangible rewards. Want to see your citizens sing your praises and hold a parade in your honor? Then set that as a goal and run your mayor avatar on PR junkets while setting policy that will drive up your popularity. Want to see the unique structures and animations of the state fair in your city instead? Then follow your advisors' input and try to draw that attraction to your fair burg.

The game uses a *Sims* style of coding, so the structures actually carry behavior code with them. Getting one of the unique buildings will unleash new behaviors and actions in your populace. *SimCity 4* is a game of key moments and rewarding outcomes, just like *The Sims*, only you achieve your prizes on a much grander scale.

Bright Lights, Big City

The activity of the Sims in your city is not a goal in itself but part and parcel of the city as a whole. Where buildings were the star in *SimCity 3000*, the new game spotlights city life and provides immediate visual feedback on city conditions with the great bonus side effects of reduced chart reading and (even better) a vibrant, bustling metropolis. Or not. While the goal in *SimCity 3000* was to create an enormous New York City-caliber metropolis, *SimCity 4* wants you to create whatever kind of city you want.

You'll need to think globally and act locally to achieve the type of city you set as your goal. You'll have big tools—like the return of the *SimCity 2000* tax engine for nurturing or discouraging specific industries—in order to create your dream/nightmare city. But you'll also have to manage *SimCity 4* on a neighborhood level. The look and activity of a particular neighborhood is determined largely by demographics. The services available in a specific area, the distance to and from a certain type of work, the quality of health care and education, and more will all influence which of the three classic economic classes come to dominate and thrive in an area.

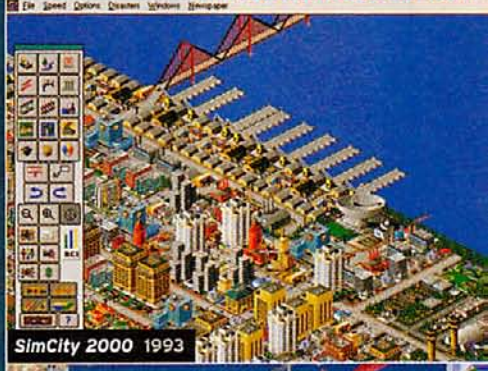
What's really great about the game is that you can create a lower-income, industrial city without being punished with a drab, lifeless cityscape. Much of this is thanks to the game's use of props, a new

THE HISTORY OF SIMCITY

Believe it or not, each of these *SimCity* screenshots is of the same city: San Francisco. As computer gaming has evolved, the look, feel, and options of the game have changed as well. The jump from the 1989 original to 1993's *SimCity 2000* is remarkable. It's impossible not to notice the graphic update and isometric view, but look closely at the toolbar: The number of buttons has more than doubled, reflecting the added options that a hefty 4MB of RAM and early '94 CPU horsepower could fuel. Graphics were the big focus of 1999's *SimCity 3000*—Maxis made the building the star of *SimCity*, and it shows in the wide variety of structures and the streamlined interface that gets out of the way of the view. The jump in graphic quality from *SimCity 3000* to *SimCity 4* is almost as dramatic as that between the first two versions of the game. This time, there's early morning fog rolling across the bay, incredibly detailed terrain, and a huge variety of models. What you can't see in the last shot is the latest game's richer sense of life. About the only thing about *SimCity* that hasn't changed is *CGW*'s opinion of it. We advised readers to "Buy this game" in 1989, we badly punned that the 1993 version was "*Sim*-ply irresistible," and we declared the last iteration of the franchise "a wonderful toy" back in 1999. Will *SimCity 4* live up to the legacy? We're betting it will.



SimCity Classic 1989


SimCity 2000 1993


SimCity 3000 1999


SimCity 4 2002





In *SimCity 4* you're not just mayor, you're God. More control over natural disasters lets you direct this twister's path of destruction.

LIVING LARGE

Just because Maxis is focusing on storytelling this time around doesn't mean they're stinting on the design of the buildings.

game feature of art elements that pop up in every type of lot. So while a wealthy neighborhood or city may have sweeping estates with mammoth swimming pools and great landscaping, less affluent residential zones can be packed with trailer parks and pink flamingos. This extends to the downtown area as well, with billboards, sidewalk cafes, and colorful awnings generated for all types of cities. The props and buildings constantly change to represent the current state of the area. Succeed in a gentrification effort and the appearance of a neighborhood will change drastically as it climbs further up the social ladder. Such a dynamic visual representation of your city not only gives it character and life, it also provides you with the same kind of information that a constantly yawning Bob Newbie gave you in *The Sims*. Less chart and text reading is always a good thing.

The cities will also have life in relation to other cities you create. Again taking its cue from *The Sims*, *SimCity 4* gives you a map with a fixed number of lots to build upon, and as in *The Sims*, the citizens of one lot can interact with the citizens of others. You might be able to address the needs of one populace by constructing something it desires somewhere else; for example, building bedroom communities that will commute to the high-tech businesses of a separate city (creating cycles of heavy traffic that you'll have to address).

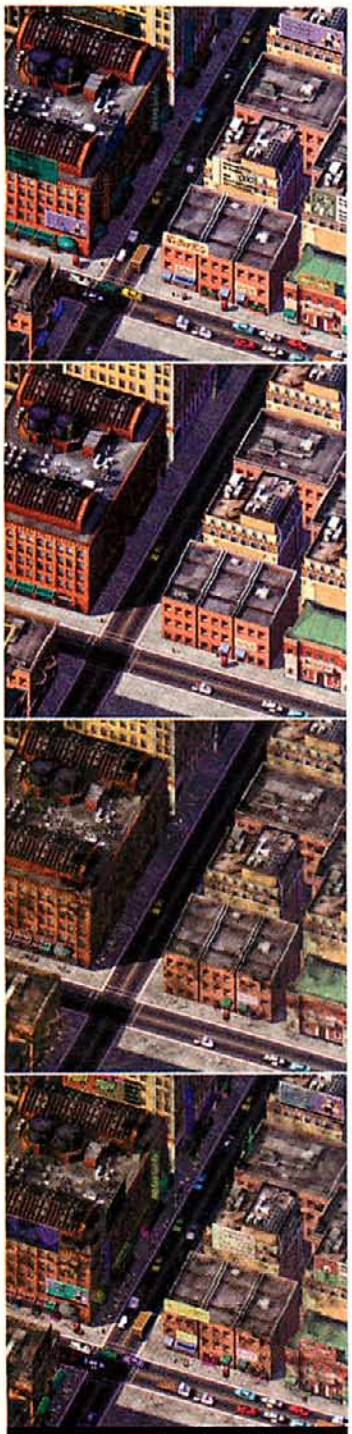
Toys for Grownups

If *The Sims* was a dollhouse, *SimCity 4* is a giant sandbox. A giant sandbox packed with toys.

There's not a single part of the game that isn't being scrutinized, evaluated, and altered with one question in mind: How can this be more fun? So buildings no longer drop from the sky or just pop up—construction crews arrive, throw up some scaffolding, and quickly erect a new building. Deleted buildings no longer

NOT SO SECRET AGENTS

Some of the more interactive objects to be found in *SimCity 4*'s toybox are what the design team is calling "agents," Sims that you can actually control and use in the game. Right now we know of four: ambulances, police, firefighters, and a little digitized version of you—the mayor. In a break from the more hands-off, classic *SimCity* play, all agents allow you to influence events more directly than just by zoning things and plopping down stretches of road. How will they work? Imagine your popularity as mayor is rocky. So you send the mayor's limo into a dodgy area in hopes of pumping up your approval ratings. But instead of the spontaneous parade you were hoping for, the locals start to riot. As hooligans trash downtown, you have the mayor flee and send in the cops, personally placing police barricades in an effort to contain and funnel the riot away from other parts of town. But the troublemakers throw one too many Molotov cocktails and a fire breaks out. When firefighters arrive, it is up to you to decide positioning and attack strategy as they battle to keep the inferno from consuming your beloved city. In a sense, agent management and usage almost become minigames inside the larger simulation.



As the demographics of a neighborhood change, the building art and accompanying props reflect the shift.

just go away, they get demolished–and by demolished, I mean they shatter into a hundred pieces, and they shatter in a unique way depending on where you click on the building, and they shatter with a great big immensely satisfying explosion. Even the road-laying cursor has an animated road crew trailing it.

And instead of just being events that you trigger and passively watch happen, the signature *SimCity* disasters are being designed as toys you use, much like the game's agents (see sidebar). So instead of clicking on Tornado and then placing it somewhere on the map to wander randomly somewhere else, you'll lead that nasty twister around on a leash, fighting to pull the unruly beast through a Tornado Alley of your choosing. Drag that baby through farmland, and you'll be treated to mooing cows swirling in the funnel. We can't wait to see the UFOs and the Godzilla-type nuclear monster.

This isn't to say all disasters are under your control. Disasters will be tied to locations, so valley communities may struggle with periodic flooding while hillier places will fret over mudslides. Worry will also be part of the equation, since disasters will be scalable. Earth tremors may precede a big earthquake. Or not. Same with the series of little ropey twisters. As with real-world natural disasters, there's no predicting when the Big One will hit; even the lesser threats will take a psychic toll on your citizenry, possibly driving them out of town.

The Sim Part of *SimCity*

All of this focus on visual feedback and the toy-oriented structure of much of the game is still in service to a very sophisticated city simulator. *SimCity 4* still charges you with creating a water supply system, building roads, collecting taxes, hauling garbage, providing adequate crime and fire prevention, nurturing commercial and industrial businesses, and far more. Everything is even more involved this time around–the designers could've talked to us for literally hours about the new traffic system and how you can even manage the timing of the streetlights, but we politely demurred. We are, after all, pinheads.

SimCity 4 is striving to strike a delicate balance of increased control with minimized hassle. So although you can change the timing of the streetlights, the secondary roads through residential areas will intelligently draw themselves. While the incredibly powerful new terrain editor will let you build the most dramatic landscapes of any *SimCity* product to date, the road-building engine will build bridges and tunnels wherever you need it to without asking. The demographic model will add new layers of gameplay, as well as prevent old *SimCity* tricks like building tons of schools on the outskirts of town in order to address a more abstract education demand–the more realistic neighborhood focus of *SimCity 4* will confer an education benefit only to the immediate areas around schools instead of to the city as a whole.

The ultimate erector set ships late this year. We can't wait.

BOMBS, CITIES, AND LIFE

Inside the Mind of Will Wright



Ironically enough, the point of origin for *SimCity* was a game that centered around you bombing and destroying cities, not building them.

In the mid-1980s, Will Wright was a budding game designer working on *Raid on Bungeling Bay*–an arcade action game in which you flew a helicopter and bombed targets. As he spent more time scrolling around maps, designing game levels, and bombing targets with the editor he built, he realized he was having more fun scrolling around the map than he was playing *Bungeling Bay*. The end result of this mental process unleashed one of the best-selling franchises in gaming history on an entirely unsuspecting public.

Unless you count early AI experiment games like John Conway's *Life*, computer gamers had never experienced anything even remotely similar to *SimCity*. The game has worked so much of itself into the popular vernacular of gaming that it's hard to remember how truly groundbreaking it was. Wright remembers, though. "Back then, computer games were much more action-oriented," he reminisces. "I never expected *SimCity* to sell like it did."

In a story that echoes the origin of *SimCity*, Wright found himself getting more and more intrigued with the software programming aspects of his first love, robotics, to the point where he decided to pursue it full-time. These skills, combined with his obvious intellectual curiosity, have resulted in some of the more innovative game designs in the field.

Much like Sid Meier, the key ingredient to Wright's success is the mind-numbing amount of research he does once he latches onto a topic for translation into game. After his initial forays with the level editor of *Bungeling Bay*, for example, Wright began researching urban planning, which led him to the cellular automata and artificial life theories of John Conway and the field of system dynamics started by Jay Forrester. "I really enjoy the reading and research phase," the designer laughs. "I probably enjoy it too much, because I end up with way too much research."

The tricky part, Wright explains, is taking the research and the subject matter and, as he puts it, "bootstrapping the player into that experience." Wright elaborates on what is perhaps the most intangible aspect of game design. "I ask myself, 'What metaphor am I going to map to the experience I'm simulating? And will gamers understand that metaphor in the first five minutes of play?' "

When asked about his favorite games, Wright's answers reveal his love of simplicity, wide-open experiences, and gameplay. Number one on his list is *Go*, the ancient boardgame; number two is Sid Meier's *Civilization*; and number three is the original *Legend of Zelda* on the NES.

So what's next? First up is Wright's current obsession–*The Sims Online*. "It's an interesting project," he explains, "because I'm discovering that, in many ways, this game is a combination of *The Sims* and *SimCity*."

And after he's sucked our lives away with *The Sims Online*? The Hall of Fame designer hints that he's got a brand-new project in development, but he chuckles, "If I talk about that, Maxis and EA are going to kill me." **–George Jones**

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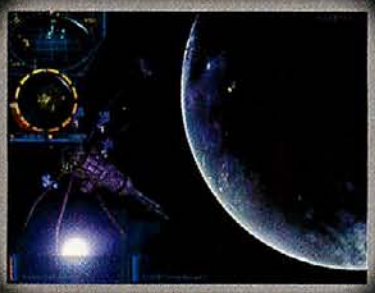
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TEEN
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Mild Violence

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Reviews

We love games, we hate games **Edited by Robert Coffey**



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How Do We Rate?

We review only finished games–no betas, no patches

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

★★★★★ **OUTSTANDING** The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play experience.

★★★★½ **VERY GOOD** Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.

★★★½★ **AVERAGE** Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or just vanilla.

★★½★★ **WEAK** Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.

★½★★★ **ABYSMAL** The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Coaster material.



The tried-and-true C&C tactics really come out in multiplayer–tank rushes rule.

Command & Conquer: Renegade

War–what is it good for? By Robert Coffey

PUBLISHER: EA Games
DEVELOPER: Westwood Studios GENRE: First-person shooter URL: www.westwood.com
ESRB RATING: Teen; blood, violence PRICE: $44.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 400, 96MB RAM, 950MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III 500, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER: LAN, Internet (2-32 players)

Playing *Command & Conquer: Renegade* is a lot like eating a big, greasy donut pumped close to bursting with horrifically bright red steroid-laced jelly: You know it's not good for you, yet you can't help but stuff your face with the testosterone-and-sugar-packed bastards. But just when you cross the threshold into the rarefied territory of eating a half-dozen of the manly confections, reality takes hold, your stomach lurches, your head swims, and you push the whole box away, swearing off donuts for life and cursing yourself for indulging your gross appetite. A week later, your heartfelt pledge is forgotten and you're pigging out all over again. Such is the *Renegade* experience.

Renegade is for every pasty-faced gamer who's wanted to be a hotheaded maverick playing fast and loose by his own set of rules. Well, mostly his own set of rules. The rules from Westwood's classic *Command & Conquer* real-time strategy games are fully in effect in this first-person shooter. In fact, that whole over-the-top *C&C* feel is present: the incredibly hectic battles, the blisteringly sharp percussive sounds of combat, and the almost-campy cut-scenes, which in this game are in-engine animations that easily trump any of the live dramas in the *C&C* games.

It's when *Renegade* drops you knee-deep into the glorious chaos of a sprawling *C&C* battle that it most succeeds. Slap some C4 on a SAM site, and you remove air defenses so the GDI can bring in reinforcements–just as in *C&C*. Dump enough tiberium on an enemy NOD soldier and he may turn into a many-mouthed visceroid–just as in *C&C*. Grab a flamethrower or a flame tank and you can cut through infantry without effort–just as in *C&C*. Disable a power plant, and laser fences go down so you can reach a towering Hand of Nod building–just as in *C&C*. Play for a few hours and your eyes glaze over, you go numb, and you find yourself running through the motions–just as you did in *C&C*. Uh-oh.

And that's probably the game's biggest problem. Despite all the big, beefy, satisfying weaponry; despite the ability to commandeer virtually every classic *C&C* vehicle; despite some truly exciting near-suicidal death runs, *Renegade* has fairly limited gameplay. And play really suffers late in the game when you spend more of your time inside buildings instead of fighting in a messy body-count *C&C* war. Too much of the later single-player game is spent inside installations–boring, right-angled, generic bases and underground facilities. Sure, it's nice to enter all the *C&C* buildings gamers know and love, but after you



Guess which of these two guys is the reckless, no-respect-for-authority killing machine you get to play as?



Planting C4 on the master control terminals of the NOD building disables them—perfect for shutting down enemy reinforcements or pesky obelisks.



Renegade is at its best when you're slogging through the wreckage of war.



NOD soldiers are so evil they keep chain guns in the bathroom. Just in case.

Are We Really Renegades If We All Work Together?

Don't buy *Renegade* if you're looking for traditional deathmatch or capture-the-flag. *Renegade* multiplayer features one style of play: a team-based C&C mode that has teams of up to 16 players trying to destroy each other's base. As in the RTS, players can purchase vehicles, defenses, and weapon upgrades. The cool thing is that tried-and-true C&C RTS tactics actually work here—take out the enemy harvester and they're immediately in trouble. It's a cool variation on teamplay that would work better with bigger maps and more map variety than the game ships with. I also was disappointed in the server performance—sparsely populated, pre-retail-ship servers shouldn't have the lag time I ran into. Here's hoping Westwood addresses both problems soon.

spend a few missions slogging through a nondescript, "never before seen" secret lab that looks like something right out of *Sin* only it's red instead of blue, well, who cares? At these times, *Renegade* is every other shooter.

Westwood deserves credit for creating *Renegade*'s very capable engine. Levels are loaded in one massive load when a mission starts instead of in today's trendy microloads, but the maps are mind-bogglingly huge, letting you charge across sweeping stretches of terrain, enter and explore enormous structures, and then exit for even more exterior action in a series of vehicles. The map sizes and the variety of available action make *Renegade* a kind of weird cousin to *Operation Flashpoint*—a cousin with a big, bumpy, misshapen head and an unnerving tendency to light the family cat on fire, but a cousin nonetheless.

Yet *Renegade* has some misfires under the hood. I had very different experiences on two different PCs—one loaded really fast but saved very slowly, the other actually had quick quick-saves, but took more than a minute to reload after I died. The two machines—both Pentium IIIs with plenty o' RAM—had occasional frame-rate drops. There were moments when I suddenly started skating uncontrollably across the landscape, forcing a reload. But my biggest peeve is with the AI, and not the enemy AI, which comes from the "run straight at 'em" school of CPU tactics. My problem is with the AI of your sometimes-teammates, particularly the scientists you have to escort three times. Why do these super-geniuses insist on positioning themselves right in front of my gun every single chance they get?

Amazingly, it's the C&C-flavored part that's going to make this game appealing to C&C fans and non-fans alike. But it's the more generic 50 percent of the game that keeps us from giving a wholehearted recommendation to *Renegade*. If the C&C faithful really build up a strong multiplayer community, this game could be a must-buy in a month or two.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

The solid single-player game needs more C&C TLC, but the cool multiplayer just about redeems *Renegade*.



Get past the ridiculously idiotic graphics and you might just find a decent game.

Demonworld: Dark Armies

The only sympathetic review this game will ever get **By John Fletcher**

PUBLISHER: **Xicat Interactive** DEVELOPER: **Ikarion** GENRE: **Real-time strategy** URL: **www.xicat.com** ESRB RATING: **Teen; blood and gore, violence** PRICE: **$39.99**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 233, 32MB RAM, 680MB hard drive space** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium III 400, 64MB RAM, 1280MB hard drive space** MULTIPLAYER: **Internet, LAN (2-4 players)**

Movies like *The Thing, Night of the Living Dead,* and *Army of Darkness* succeeded because they had good ideas that were passionately presented and made you forgive the plethora of low-budget compromises that ran through them. Well, *Demonworld: Dark Armies* is the gaming equivalent of those films. It ain't pretty, and it sure as hell isn't going to win any awards, but underneath its underwhelming exterior lurks an enjoyable, well-balanced game that grows on you if you can just stomach the painful delivery.

DA succeeds for one reason: excellent scenario design. It's based on the Demonworld fantasy miniatures system and has parallels to *Warhammer* and the old *D&D Battlesystem.* With this in mind, it isn't surprising that while the storyline is childish at best, the individual missions are always unique and challenging. The single missions give you the chance to run each of the three represented powers: Empire (meaning Human), Dwarf, and Orc, but the 50-mission Empire-only campaign game is where *DA* shines. From dungeon crawls and recon missions to sieges and massive field battles, *DA* has it all. To win you need to keep a balanced force. There is a wide array of combat units, from basic foot soldiers to exotic, flamethrowing siege towers, as well as individual warrior, priest, and magician heroes. Good units are essential for the field battles, but don't skimp on the heroes because many scenarios revolve around them and *DA* relishes in killing them off. I found it best to disband weaker combat units and rebuild higher quality ones, and to rely on magic-using heroes in the big battles instead of warriors, who tend to get hammered on.

Although spell selection is limited, one good magician and priest team can go a long way to even the odds for an outnumbered army. The Healing Hand spell is especially useful because it will quickly return a battered unit to fighting shape. Surprisingly, the warriors fare best in the nonbattle scenarios, where sheer numbers don't negate their high hit points.

Too bad 'most everything else in *DA* sucks. For one thing, there's no printed manual: You have to download it from the game's Website. The crude, 2D graphics are achingly antiquated, while the explosions and spell effects are unremittingly garish. Onscreen real estate is at a premium, and I was constantly scrolling in order to keep track of everything. It's extremely difficult to select and control units, especially in close combat, and it occasionally becomes impossible to attack enemies simply because you can't isolate their icon. The inky blackness that shrouds everything outside of line-of-sight is also very disorienting. The lack of a minimap or zoom function compounds these problems. And, at the risk of piling it on, the Power Point-esque mission briefings are so laughably wretched they're good.

I'll be the first to admit that I cannot recommend this game on its technical merits. If you want state of the art, avoid this game like the plague. But if you're seeking a surprisingly engrossing, fun-filled fantasy epic, *DA* is worth a try, warts and all.

***Dark Armies* succeeds for one reason: excellent scenario design.**

VERDICT ★★½☆☆

It's a truly bad game...and I really liked playing it.



You don't actually see the pigs or rabbits in the game engine—just in irritating pop-up videos.

S.W.I.N.E.

No wonder the French think Jerry Lewis is funny By Tom Price

PUBLISHER: Fishtank Interactive DEVELOPER: Stormregion GENRE: Real-time strategy with animals URL: www.swine-online.com ESRB RATING: Teen; comic mischief, violence

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 466, 96MB RAM, 900MB hard drive space, 32MB video card RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III 600, 256MB RAM, 64MB video card MULTIPLAYER: LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

Maybe you have to be European to get them, but the whole French bunnies-versus-German pigs jokes that are at the core of this game's highly weird concept are about as unfunny as *The Day the Clown Cried*. The first few times a little animated rabbit or pig rattles off a command in their très exaggerated accent, you might giggle a bit. After two or three missions, however, you'll be trying to yank out the speaker cables.

And you may want to yank out the monitor cable as well. Aside from being annoyingly corny, *S.W.I.N.E.* also fails at being a decent real-time strategy. The elements seem to be there: The game has streamlined, resource-eschewing, vehicle-based gameplay (à la *Ground Control*) and a decent-looking 3D engine with nice clean models and textures. But where *S.W.I.N.E.* starts to get sloppy is in the AI department. I don't think I've ever seen worse pathfinding in a game. You'll waste hours just babysitting a unit as it tries to find its way around corners. Plus, the otherwise nice graphical presentation is marred by countless glitches.

I don't think I've ever seen worse pathfinding in a game.

S.W.I.N.E. had the potential to be a cute concept game powered by a decent tactical RTS engine. But its lame jokes and shoddy programming make for a serious pain in the neck, gaming-wise.



Maneuvering around in a tight place is a nightmare.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

If you want yet another reason to dislike the French, then go buy *S.W.I.N.E.*



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Star Wars Starfighter

Not enough schwing in this *X-Wing* By Elliott Chin

PUBLISHER: LucasArts
DEVELOPER: Secret Level
GENRE: Space arcade-action
URL: swstarfighter.lucasarts.com
ESRB RATING: Teen; violence
PRICE: $39.95

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 350, 64MB RAM, 680MB hard drive space, 3D accelerator
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III or higher, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None

Don't go looking for another installment of the *X-Wing* series here; *Star Wars Starfighter* is another action-shooter in the vein of console games like *Shadows of the Empire* and *Rogue Squadron*. In fact, it's a straight port of the game that debuted on the PlayStation 2 more than a year ago, and was recently released for the Xbox.

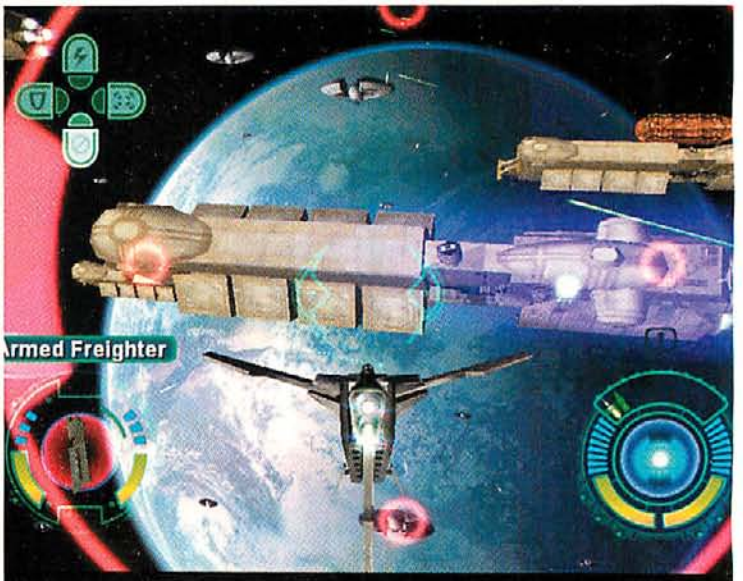
It's immediately apparent that *Starfighter* is a console game first and foremost, with action that comes quickly and frequently. Like a console game, it's initially short, but it's filled with bonus missions. *Starfighter* takes place just before the events of *Episode I*, but it involves the same theme—stopping the Trade Federation from invading Naboo.

Although it's not a rail shooter, *Star Wars Starfighter* has fairly confined mission arenas with little need for exploration. There are more than a dozen missions with good variety among them: dogfights in deep space, escort missions for air and ground, bombing raids on planets, and freighter captures. Most of the time you'll be flying circles around your target because the mission areas are so small. But the action is intense enough—with enemies plastered over every square inch of the screen—to make you forget you're flying in a box.

You start out playing a Royal Naboo pilot named Rhys Dallows. This scenario is followed by meeting and playing as two other pilots, Vana and Nym, a mercenary and pirate, respectively. Throughout the game, you'll switch off among the three on a per-mission basis. You don't get to choose which character you fly as; the game chooses for you. Storywise, the cinematics and in-game cut-scenes explain why the three pilots decide to band together against the Trade Federation. In terms of gameplay, they ensure a good amount of variety in the play experience and missions, helping to break up what otherwise could have become an incredibly repetitive game.

Starfighter is a short game and can be completed within a few hours. But what gives it a vast amount of replayability are the bonus missions. Each mission has three bonus goals; they're optional, but you need to complete them in order to unlock the secrets. Bonus goals range from destroying a secondary target to protecting a minor character to ensuring that your escorted ship doesn't suffer any hull damage. Completing a bonus objective gives you a medal: bronze if you succeed at one, silver for two, and gold for all three. The good thing about *Starfighter* is that it actually lists the bonus missions and the medals you need in order to unlock each one in a screen called Bonus Mission. It really helps to know what you are playing for, rather than blindly trying to accomplish every goal in the hopes of unlocking something.

One shortcoming of *Starfighter* is its lack of multiplayer support, especially given that the Xbox version had two-player games. Also, while the visuals are good, they aren't nearly as spectacular as they could have been. In all, though, *Starfighter* is a competent shooter. It's essentially a twitch game, with little in the way of real plot and character development. Those looking for deeper space games, such as *Independence War*, or even the old *TIE Fighter* series, might be put off by its simplicity. But if you're a fan of *Star Wars* and quick, console-style action, you'll find much to recommend *Starfighter*.



You'll get your fill of frantic *Star Wars* space action in *Starfighter*.

Starfighter is a console game first and foremost, with action that comes quickly and frequently.



Even though you mostly play in tight, confined areas, the sheer amount of action dissipates any sense of claustrophobia.



By completing bonus missions, such as destroying or protecting certain ships, you can unlock secret ships or get other rewards.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

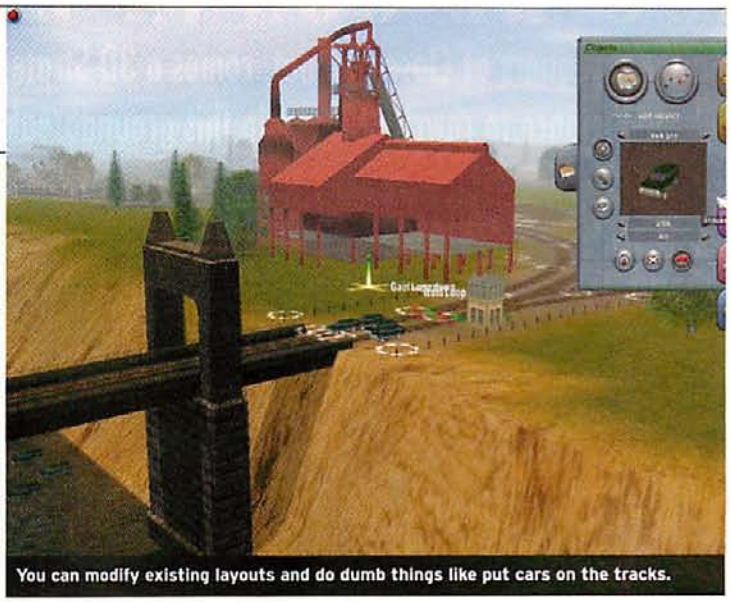
A quick and decent space shooter for the *Star Wars* fan.

Trainz

A model game for model railroaders **By Loyd Case**

PUBLISHER: **Strategy First**
DEVELOPER: **Auran Holdings Pty** GENRE: **Railroad sim**
URL: **www.trainz.com**
ESRB RATING: **Everyone**
PRICE: **$44.99**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 400, 128MB RAM, 800MB hard drive space, 16MB video card**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium III 733, 256MB RAM, 32MB video card**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **None**



You can modify existing layouts and do dumb things like put cars on the tracks.

The term "hackers" probably originated with the MIT model railroaders club many years ago. Now, Auran Pty of Australia delivers a model railroading package aimed squarely at today's hackers. And for the most part, *Trainz* delivers a superb set of design tools and a reasonably facile 3D railroading experience.

Unfortunately, it's not clear what the target audience is here. The tool set for creating your own maps and layouts, which Auran dubs Surveyor, is superb and sophisticated. The tools are also complicated, and the user interface hails from the Bryce3D School of Interface Design. You can use 3D Studio Max, or its baby sibling, GMax, to design 3D objects for the world. However, a lack of any good design tutorial turns this into an exercise in frustration for those who have never dabbled in 3D modeling tools. Surveyor's not any harder than something like Bryce3D, but most of the model railroaders I know would be completely lost in minutes.

Trainz has _MS Train Simulator_ beat hands-down in the graphics department.

The Driver mode, which is essentially the simulation mode, falls a little short, too. While the world is alive and busy with cars scooting around and clouds scudding through the sky, there's nothing much to do beyond just driving the train around. There are no goal-oriented challenges, as in *Microsoft Train Simulator*. It's really just one big sandbox mode.

However, *Trainz* has *MS Train Simulator* beat hands-down in the graphics department. The Auran graphics engine is flat-out stunning, and the Auran Website boasts an active community of modders and designers ready to help out. But unless you're willing to invest in the steep learning curve to design your own layouts and trains, you'll have a better railroading experience with *Train Simulator*.



The graphics are superb—and you can even have people waiting around for your train.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

Model railroaders with fast computers will love it.

Screamer 4x4

4x4 racing on the PC gets its first real sim **By Tom Price**

PUBLISHER: **Virgin Interactive**
DEVELOPER: **Clever's Development**
GENRE: **Off-road racing**
URL: **www.clevers.com**
ESRB RATING: **Everyone**
PRICE: **$20**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 233, 32MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space**
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **LAN, Internet (2-4 players)**



Don't take the exacting physics too lightly.

The title *Screamer 4x4* would seem to connote a more "extreme" type of off-road game; something to compete with *4X4 Evo* or *Redneck Racing*. But *Screamer* is a completely different animal altogether, and should satisfy certain PC gamers a lot more than those other titles I mentioned.

Screamer 4x4 is a hardcore driving sim, complete with realistic physics and a type of gameplay that has less to do with catching big air and tearing up the countryside and more to do with negotiating a difficult route up a steep grade and properly calculating your gear ratios. In a sense, *Screamer 4x4* is more of a puzzle game. Anyone who's into the technicalities of real-life off-road driving will probably like having to solve those puzzles. Or they might just prefer going out and driving up muddy inclines for real.

The only time the game really starts to cut loose and be fun is in multiplayer. All the regular multiplayer modes you'd expect in an off-road title are complemented by really fun king-of-the-hill and destruction challenges. Sadly, the number of players is limited to four.

Screamer is already developing a rabid core fan base and is destined for cult-hit status. But this reviewer was a bit bored by it. Call me a mullet-wearing redneck, but I prefer my off-road action a little more exciting. Still, if you like this kind of thing, then this is the...well, you know.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

Incredible realism doesn't always equal incredible fun.

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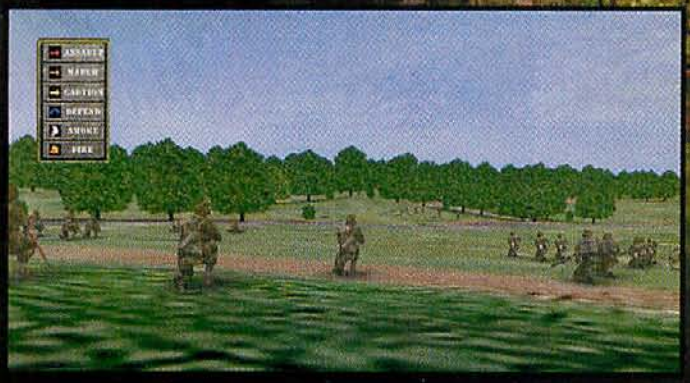
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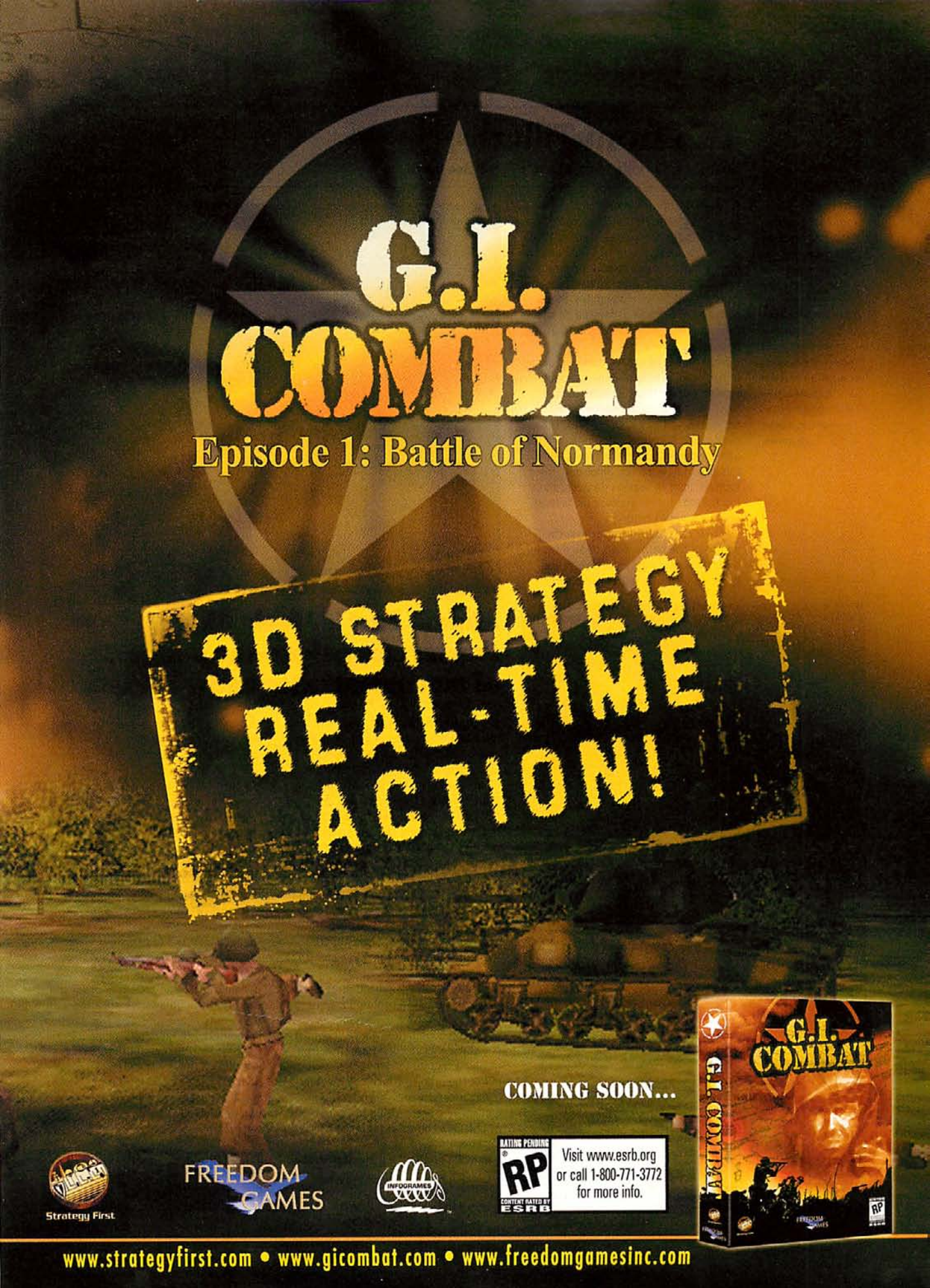
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- Realistic 3D environment, maps are drawn from the actual terrain of Normandy.
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- Over 40 armored vehicles and artillery.
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- Accurate models for vehicles, vehicle textures, and their specs.
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Trio from Tiller

Bulge '44, Corinth, Middle East '67 By Bruce Geryk

PUBLISHER: HPS Simulations
DEVELOPER: John Tiller
GENRE: Wargame
URL: www.hpssims.com
ESRB RATING: Not rated
PRICE: $50

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133, 32MB RAM
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II with 64MB RAM, 16MB video RAM for large battles
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: PBEM, hotseat, modem (2 players)

John Tiller's *Battleground* and *Panzer Campaigns* series of wargames are essentially quantitative extensions of the boardgames that many people in the hobby grew up with. And after so many iterations of the game engines, these series have become as familiar to some computer wargamers as those treasured boardgames were.

What makes or breaks these PC games at this point is how well the situation being modeled fits the system. On at least two previous occasions (with *Normandy '44* and *Kharkov '42*), Tiller overloaded his game with units, and the game system showed the strain. With this trio of new games, Tiller gets the formula right to various degrees, and the reasons for his success (or failure) are the same as before.

Middle East '67 works because the nature of the battle means you must simultaneously fight in several "situations" as part of a larger campaign.



All three games have a 3D view, but the one in *Corinth* seems most appropriate.



The small scenarios in *Middle East '67* are a microcosm of the campaign.



While the campaign in *Bulge '44* is a bit overwhelming, it does have several good stand-alone scenarios.

Middle East '67 feels like the best *Panzer* campaigns–the perfect mix of movement rates and unit density.

The Golan Heights, West Bank, and Sinai are all different enough and separated enough to give the game a feeling of larger scope. *Bulge '44*, on the other hand, gives players an almost continuous front of units to track, and because of the interlocking nature of the movement and combat systems, it requires the same kind of micromanagement seen in games like *Kharkov '42*. *Middle East '67* plays like the best of the *Panzer Campaign* games–*Smolensk '41*–in that it finds the perfect mix of movement rates and unit density, which together accurately simulate the battle and make the game challenging and fun.

Because of the command system these games use, a continuous front leads to excessive micromanagement at command boundaries, where you must painstakingly keep one formation from mixing with another. While this may mimic the problems faced by real-life commanders, it isn't much fun for gamers who aren't using the games as part of a course at the Army War College.

In fact, *Corinth*, the game that uses the oldest engine (*Battleground*), is the one that feels the most satisfying. The way in which unit density on the Civil War battlefield encourages players to naturally use brigades as a maneuver unit makes the standard conventions of wargaming seem much less artificial. But when there are so many units on the screen that you can't easily keep track of them, the whole thing starts to seem like an exercise in spreadsheet combat.

Of all his games, Tiller's Napoleonic designs have always had an elegance that has eluded his modern offerings. *Smolensk '41* came closest to that ideal, and *Middle East '67* almost recaptures the feeling. *Bulge '44* falls into the trap of fitting a game into a system rather than vice versa. *Corinth* adds a sort of dynamic campaign system in which you can play through a series of battles with the results of one affecting the situation in the next; but more important, it has the best tactical feel of the three games.

Although these would definitely not be a good choice for anyone wanting the latest in graphics, any of these games should satisfy old-school wargamers.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

Good historical sims, but the games' engines are showing their age.

Original War

Rising above its budget-bin limitations **By Thomas L. McDonald**

PUBLISHER: **Virgin Interactive** DEVELOPER: **Altar** GENRE: **Real-time strategy** URL: **www.original-war.com** ESRB RATING: **Teen; strong language, violence** PRICE: **$20**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 266, 64MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM** MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **LAN, Internet (2-6 players)**

Some games are bound to make the worst possible first impression. Take the mysterious real-time strategy game *Original War*, which materialized out of some dark corner of the Czech Republic for release here by Virgin Interactive, a company I was sure no longer existed. Dumped into a consumer-retardant budget line called "Anytime Anywhere 20 Bucks" and given a tiny box with terrible cover art, no manual, and a single case that holds two discs stacked one atop the other, it was destined to oblivion no matter what we say here. This game is no lost treasure, but it's far better than it looks at first.



If we arrived back in 2 million B.C. to mine and get this mineral to Alaska for a time machine, wouldn't the mineral already *be* in Alaska? And where are we going to leave it once we get it to Alaska? The tool shed? Never mind.

Where *Original War*'s gameplay departs from the mundane is in how it draws elements of *Jagged Alliance* into the RTS mix.

If you think about it for longer than a second, the premise just sounds dumb. In order to power a time machine, the U.S. needs a mineral exclusive to Siberia. They send a contingent of military troops back to 2 million B.C. to mine it and walk it across the Bering Strait land bridge to Alaska, where we will find it in our own future. When they get to the past, the Russkies are waiting. The vast, branching campaign (there is no skirmish mode) also chucks in mysterious Arabs and primitive man-creatures for a delirious descent into a wholly logic-free zone.

Sent into this breach are soldiers, scientists, mechanics, and engineers who prattle on with atrocious voice-acting, spewing endless profanity. Narrative is handled with little cartoon portrait pop-ups over the *de rigueur* RTS top-down perspective of the landscape. Base-building, control, resources, and research are all standard RTS fare. *Original War*'s gameplay departs from the mundane by drawing in elements of *Jagged Alliance*. You don't build units, but are instead given a finite squad of men who staff buildings and use equipment. With each successful mission, you gain points that can be used to increase the mechanical, engineering, scientific, or military abilities of individual units. Equipment components become available through research and can be made into vehicles and weapons.

For all its crummy production values and corny moments, *Original War* is better than many big-budget RTS games. For a fraction of the *Battle for Dune* budget, Altar has turned out a better game. Cheesier, certainly, but better.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

Despite the somewhat rough production values, *Original War* delivers interesting small-scale RTS action.

The War Engine

Build your own wargame **By Bruce Geryk**

PUBLISHER: **Shrapnel Games** DEVELOPER: **Boku Strategy Games** GENRE: **War simulation** URL: **www.shrapnelgames.com** ESRB RATING: **Not rated** PRICE: **$39.95**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium 250, 64MB RAM, 160MB hard drive space** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **None** MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **Email, hotseat (2 players)**

If you've ever designed a simple wargame in your head and wished you could somehow turn it into an actual computer game, *The War Engine* is exactly what you've been waiting for. Essentially an upgrade to Shrapnel's *Armies of Armageddon*, this sequel includes the full *Armies of Armageddon* campaign as well as six other fully playable campaigns, which take place in settings ranging from a Norse fantasyland to World War II and even space. You needn't start making your own for a while.

But making your own is what *The War Engine* is all about. Unlike gaming tools like *Aide de Camp 2*, *TWE* is a complete wargame system that enforces the rules instead of just keeping track of units. While you're locked into the basic game system (which is turn based with morale, assault, overwatch, and limited intelligence features), you can change just about everything else, from the unit values to their appearance and even the details of the game mechanics.

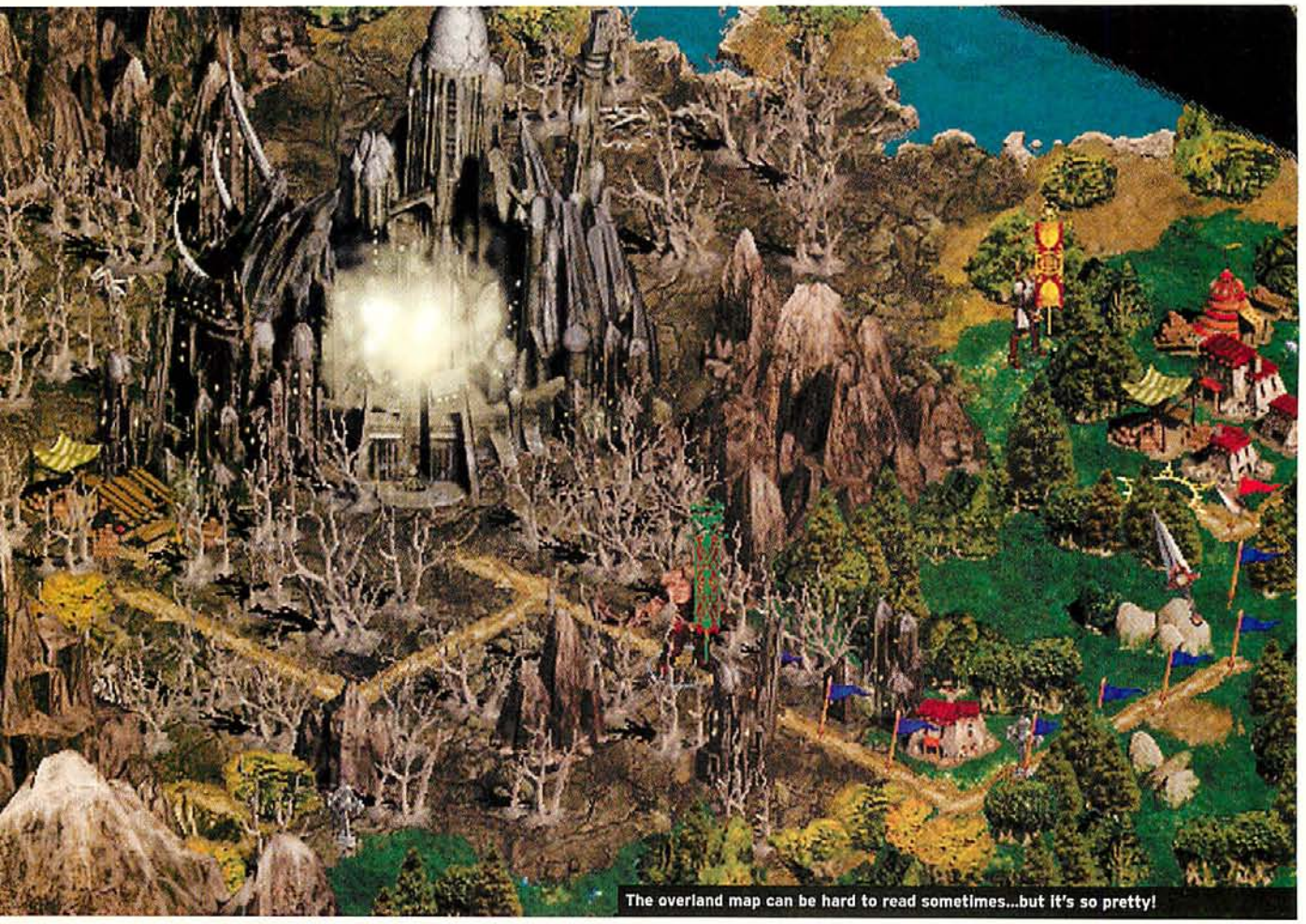


Vikings square off against magic fantasy creatures.

While the game does suffer from the homogenization that the game system imposes, for traditional wargame-style play it works quite well. There are unfortunately no economic/production rules to allow for creating truly strategic games, but for those looking for a simple way to bring their game ideas to life, this is a good fit.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

Great for designing that wargame you've always dreamed of, as long as you don't mind dated graphics.



The overland map can be hard to read sometimes...but it's so pretty!

Disciples II: Dark Prophecy

Long, dark, and handsome By Jason Kapalka

PUBLISHER: Infogrames
DEVELOPER: Strategy First
GENRE: Turn-based strategy
URL: www.disciples2.com
ESRB RATING: Teen; animated violence
PRICE: $39.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 233, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 500, 128MB RAM, 600MB hard drive space
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN, TCP/IP, hotseat (2-4 players)

Like the bookish but soulful outcast in a teen movie who lets down her hair and takes off her glasses to become the prom queen, *Disciples II* transforms the original ugly-duckling sleeper into a world-class game.

It was easy to dismiss the first game as a *Heroes of Might and Magic* knock-off with a garish blend of art styles, but its unique charms grew on you when given a chance. The sequel is nearly identical in gameplay, with a few new units thrown in, but the presentation is now up to par with the well-balanced mechanics, and the result is a beautiful title that can easily stand its ground against the popular and long-running *Heroes* franchise.

Devilishly Good Looks

The first *Disciples* featured great 2D portrait art for all the units, but it was sabotaged by the clumsy 3D versions present on the battlefield. *Disciples II* remedies this problem, and now the combat animations are every bit the match of the gorgeous hand-painted portraits. Eschewing the cartoony storybook feel of the *Heroes* games for a grim dark-fantasy world full of decaying corpses, blood sacrifices, and truly nasty-looking demons, *Disciples II* looks simply terrific.

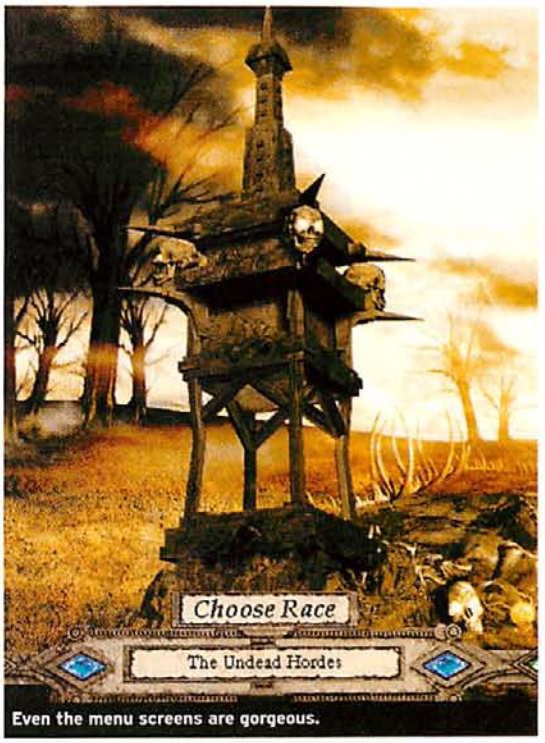
You control a handful of heroes and their associated troops, who march around the map collecting treasure, fighting monsters, gaining levels and magic items, and eventually besieging the enemy castles. Unlike more "serious" titles like the *Warlords* series, the feel of the game is closer to that of an RPG than an epic strategy game. You're usually forced to nurture a single hero throughout a scenario or campaign, with a few other characters used as cannon fodder and errand boys. Strategic sites like cities, gold mines, and mana crystals are of secondary importance to building up your main hero's experience level.

Where *Disciples* breaks ranks with *Heroes* is in its unique combat system. In theory it's almost childishly simple; in practice, it can be brutally difficult to master. Each side can have up to six units, depending on the hero's leadership rating, lined up in either front or rear ranks. There's no movement at all: Units simply take turns dishing out damage to each other until one side perishes or flees. But each of the four races has special units that can turn the tide if used properly. For instance, the Ghost's paralyzing fear attack can immobilize any opposing unit, no matter how powerful, making the unit a sitting duck. But the Ghost is slow and weak, easily picked off by archers or ranged units that get to act first. Other special units include werewolves immune to any weapon, dwarfish inventors who boost the attacks of their comrades, fleet-footed

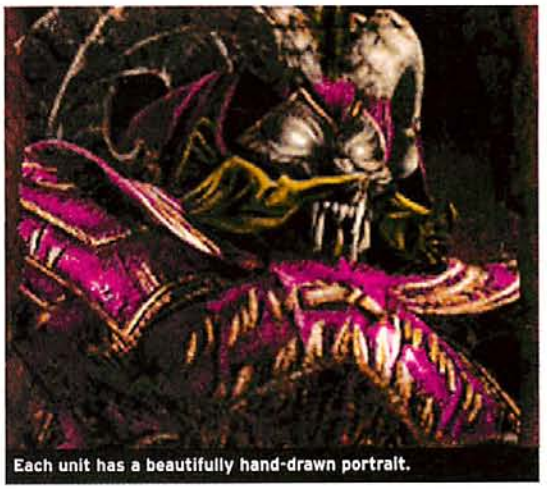

The Nosferat's life-draining attack steals hit points from all susceptible enemy units.

Disciples II transforms the original ugly-duckling sleeper into a world-class game.


On beefy machines, you get tons of fancy magical effects during battles.



Even the menu screens are gorgeous.


Each unit has a beautifully hand-drawn portrait.

assassins capable of poisoning their targets, and many more.

Finding the Balance of Power

The most remarkable aspect of *Disciples II* is how carefully all of the units have been balanced: Every powerful unit has its counter, and trying to discover the optimal army configuration for defeating your foes is a big part of the game.

Your heroes will of course gain new abilities with experience, but it is just as important to upgrade your troops. What makes this tricky—and interesting—is the fact that most units have a branching upgrade structure. Your warlocks, for instance, can be upgraded either to necromancers, who can cast plague spells over entire armies, or to witches, who can transform enemy units into imps. You can't, however, have both, and once you've made your decision, you're stuck with it for the rest of the game.

Similarly, the lord you choose to play at the beginning of a game can completely alter your style of play. The basic warlord can regenerate hit points between battles. Meanwhile, a magelord's units have to be healed in cities, but in return you gain vastly superior magic firepower. The guildmaster lord lacks regeneration and magic, but makes up for this with his powerful thief units that can infiltrate cities, poison parties, or bushwhack enemy leaders.

There are several dozen stand-alone quests, as well as a lengthy campaign of seven scenarios for each of the four races. If you're looking for a game with a lot of play value, this is it: Completing all the included quests would take months, and that's not even taking the included scenario editor or multiplayer into account.

There are a few drawbacks. Until you get used to the game's intentionally dark look, the overland map can be confusing and hard to read. The emphasis on army composition means that the outcome of battles is often completely predetermined by the time you've joined the fray. Finally, even on the lowest difficulty, the game is far from easy, and you can expect to do a lot of saving and reloading to make it through even the earliest scenarios.

These are minor issues, though, compared to the game's many strengths. *Disciples II: Dark Prophecy* may have just reset the bar for the eventual release of *Heroes IV*.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

The *Heroes* series has a serious new competitor for the turn-based fantasy tiara.

Siege of Avalon

The Un-*Diablo* By Charles Ardai

PUBLISHER: Global Star Software
DEVELOPER: Digital Tome
GENRE: Action-RPG
URL: www.siege-of-avalon.com
ESRB RATING: Teen; violence
PRICE: $29.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 450, 64MB RAM, 40MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III 550, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None



The fights are slow and not exactly what you'd call dramatic. Or fulfilling.

When *Diablo II* came out, my wife and I stayed up past midnight for weeks playing it. Even after we'd beaten it several times, we just couldn't stop playing. That's how addictive we found it.

But if you asked me today what the story of the game was, I couldn't tell you. Something about this demon, and this other demon, and this magical stone, and...let's be honest, the story was just an excuse for the fight scenes.

Siege of Avalon aims to address this shortcoming by using a *Diablo*-style game engine to tell a story that has the richness of a good fantasy novel. Largely it succeeds, unfolding over six "chapters" a well-told yarn about a medieval citadel under attack by treacherous soldiers from within and vicious nomads from without.

Unfortunately, as much as *Siege of Avalon* improves upon *Diablo*-esque storytelling, it's a huge step backward in terms of gameplay. Things start off slowly as you spend several hours exploring the citadel grounds; there's not only almost nothing to kill, there's also precious little to do. You spend a lot of time poking around in empty rooms and initiating conversations with characters that don't have anything interesting to say (but who sometimes say uninteresting things at great length). Some of the characters assign you quests, but they typically require less brainwork than repetitive legwork.



Read a good game lately?

When you finally make it out into the woods surrounding the citadel and combat breaks out, it's a sluggish, unsatisfying affair. If your sword arm swung any slower, you could use it to conduct "The Blue Danube," and if your mana recharged any slower—well, it really couldn't. Yes, both improve as you pay for training in various arts, but even in the faster-paced middle chapters, you ache for the fluidity and energy of *Diablo*'s action.

Meanwhile, the game's fine writers overdo a good thing by swamping you with screen after screen of text that you have to read—there's not only a journal that summarizes events as they occur (and that quickly grows to dozens of pages in length), there's also a quest log, an adventure log, and numerous pre-written, all-text, multiscreen dialogues in which all you get to do is click repeatedly on what amounts to a Continue button. I haven't had to read this much text in a computer game since the days of *Zork*—and back then, at least, it was interactive.

The uncommonly high quality of the prose saves the game from being completely unbearable, but the fact remains that if I want to read, I'll visit Barnes & Noble. And if I want to play a game, I'll boot up *Diablo II* for a fourth go-round.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

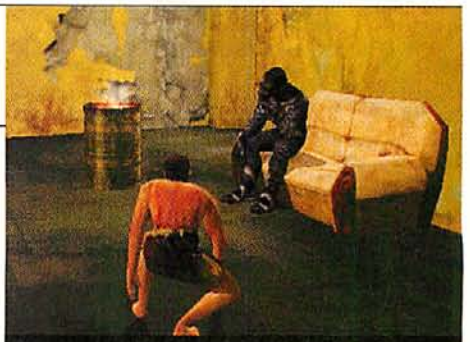
***Siege of Avalon* is earnest and well written, but awfully tedious to play.**

Planet of the Apes

...And you smell like one too By Jason "Chim-Chim" Brown

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: Visiware
GENRE: Action-adventure
URL: www.ubisoft.com
ESRB RATING: Teen; violence
PRICE: $24.95

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 650MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: None
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None



The signature Drowsy Guard—they actually tell you how to get around this in the manual.

Here's a nice companion piece to last summer's lousy, boring remake of the original *Planet of the Apes* movie: a lousy, boring action-adventure game, lacking both action and adventure.

An example of "adventure": An ape approaches the one door of the room you're in. What can be done? Stand one foot from the door, in plain view of everyone—once you crouch, the ape passes unknowingly. If you hide farther back, you'll be spotted when you exit. The game's puzzles are actually difficult because no one would think solutions this idiotic would actually work.

The "action" is set in uninspired levels, employing such boring gray and brown visuals that it makes looking at my cubicle's gray walls a joy. Lacking mouse support and strafing, *Apes* uses a laggy, over-the-shoulder camera that never aptly shows the situation. Somehow this is serviceable, considering that combat consists of repeatedly mashing one button. But sometimes *Apes* arbitrarily decides that you pressed your button too slowly, or that because you attempted to run and equip your weapon simultaneously, you have to enter combat empty-handed. Thanks to the lack of saves, you get to repeat the pain of the whole level. Fortunately, enemies invariably run straight at you, but as a player, you can't do much better.

As a game, *Planet of the Apes* fails utterly. As a skeet target, it succeeds in spades. Someone shout "Pull!"

VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆

Keep your stinking paws off those dirty apes.

JOIN THE GREATEST SQUADRON OF FIGHTERS IN HISTORY.



EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence

Relive the honor, the glory, and the triumph of the greatest aerial fighters ever to grace history books. Join the fray in a sprawling campaign, reenacting the *deadliest* sky battles in the European Theatre of World War II. Traverse over 1 million square miles of point-to-point accurate terrain as you and your squadron of elite aces strike at the ruthless Axis powers. *Feel* the sting of the flak and the rattle of incoming shells with one of the most detailed damage models ever. Test your mettle against *fourteen* flyable aircraft, each with real 3D cockpits and fully functioning dials and gauges. And if you find yourself surrounded by enemies, don't give up. You're not alone. You're part of the Attack Squadron.

ATTACK SQUADRON

FROM Jane's COMBAT SIMULATIONS

DEVELOPED BY mad·doc

PUBLISHED BY XICAT INTERACTIVE

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Capitalism II

Don't I already do this at work? By Bruce Geryk

PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: Enlight Software
GENRE: Real-time strategy
URL: www.ubisoft.com
ESRB RATING: Everyone
PRICE: $19.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 233, 64MB RAM, 250MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 350, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Internet, LAN (2-7 players)



The circa-1995 *SimCity*-like graphics do little to give the game atmosphere.

Describing all aspects of Trevor Chan's *Capitalism II* in 400 words is as likely as using this space to teach you corporate finance. Fortunately, the game's tutorial campaign will do the latter for you.

Capitalism II is a real-time strategy game about making cornflakes. It's also about growing the corn, building a factory, buying the corn, adding sugar, making the cereal, developing a brand name, and advertising it on the radio. If you're not into cornflakes, there are cameras, leather jackets, air conditioners, and more than five dozen other products for you to sell to your virtual customers.

For the most part, Chan has succeeded in making what is really a hardcore business sim into an enjoyable strategy game. The learning curve is tremendous, and some of the game's highest points will be when you find a profitable niche where there is little competition in which to expand. If you have any inclination to explore the inner workings of business, *Capitalism II* has a lot to offer. Unfortunately, things like uninspiring graphics, an interface that struggles to keep up with the many mouse-clicks the game requires, and the high level of micromanagement mean that if you're not inspired to hunt for better corn suppliers as a goal, it's unlikely that you'll be swept away by the romance of opening a new department store.

The game has certain assumptions and limitations built in—executive pay is always tied to corporate profitability, and vertical integration is the ultimate goal for manufacturers—but in general, the level of detail is impressive. There are some weird things about the economic model, such as debt-free companies with positive, increasing earnings trading below book value, but if you know what that means, you most likely already do this sort of stuff at work. Which, in the end, is the biggest problem with the game. While the gameplay is quite deep and the level of detail makes a wide range of strategies possible, in the end it's essentially about selling shirts. For those who use computer games to escape from real lives of corporate finance, this isn't a very good trade-off. If you're simply a fan of strategy in any form, though, *Capitalism II* will keep you watching your debt ratios. Maybe you'll eventually need to find an escape from gaming and take a job as a CEO.

If you want to explore the inner workings of business, *Capitalism II* has a lot to offer.



The layout system is a nice way to abstract the manufacturing and sales process.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

Deep gameplay and strong AI don't keep this game from feeling like a second job.

Mall Tycoon

About as fun as Root Canal Tycoon By Arcadian Del Sol

PUBLISHER: Take-Two Interactive
DEVELOPER: Holistic Design
GENRE: Strategy
URL: www.malltycoon.com
ESRB RATING: Everyone
PRICE: $19.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 300MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: None
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None

If you have a computer game in development and it sucks, the best way to ensure that you'll still sell a few thousand copies is to slap the word "Tycoon" on the front of the box. Never mind the fact that your customers are going to assume that your game is a well-designed and highly detailed simulation that bears the Sid Meier seal of approval. That's their problem.

Mall Tycoon wants so badly to be part of another developer's *Tycoon* franchise, but it never comes close. This game is so not fun, it almost put me into a coma. You start with a large box. Inside, you build smaller boxes. You fill these boxes with storefronts populated by blurry clip-art images. Sometimes zombies invade your mall but they only chase people—they never catch them and eat their brains. All this using an interface that tries to present monthly sales figures in a way that makes you almost believe they are entertaining. The features on the box are in the game, and the game itself is largely bug-free. It is also entirely fun-free. I'd prefer to be in an actual mall getting a haircut than play another minute of this narcolepsy-inducing nightmare.



Now to lease your store to a retail chain with a product line that meets the needs of all four people living across the street. Isn't this fun?

VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆

Don't play this game unless somebody pays you.



Navigating through piles of menus can get tricky, especially as your car empire expands.



Bidding for factories, dealerships, and garages is necessary for expanding your empire. Watch out, because the competition will always try to outbid you, even if they don't have the cash.



In addition to building cars, you'll have to negotiate with ad agencies to get word out about your product.

Car Tycoon

Can you say "Recall"? By Raphael Liberatore

PUBLISHER: **Fishtank Interactive**
DEVELOPER: **Vectorcom Development**
GENRE: **Business-management sim**
URL: **www.cartycoon-online.com**
ESRB RATING: **Everyone**
PRICE: **$29.95**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM (128MB required for Windows 2000), 900MB hard drive space** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 350, 128MB RAM**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **None**

Trying to build a car empire in America takes buckets of capital, ambition, ingenuity, and luck. Unfortunately, Fishtank's newest automobile empire builder, *Car Tycoon*, doesn't tap into this winning formula. It's a good concept that's poorly executed.

Your quest for dominance begins with one factory and one dealership; it's up to you to design, manufacture, and then distribute your vehicles to the local population. You'll grapple with supply and demand issues, research of car components, corporate subterfuge, and the stock market. Over time, you'll purchase more manufacturing plants, dealerships, and garages in order to expand your empire throughout three cities. The trick is to do this while maintaining profitability. The real challenge, however, lies in wading through a quagmire of bugs, poor implementation, missing pieces, and a general lack of detail.

The research model seems based on tricycle production, not automobile manufacturing. Pouring tons of capital into researching various automobile components still limits you to manufacturing seven prefab car types, from small cars and trucks to convertibles, each having the same mix of parts. Because you can produce only one car at a time per factory, the only strategy lies in fitting the component that works best into certain models. There's no designing your own car from the ground up.

Car Tycoon's financial model misfires like a Yugo. Unlike in pure American capitalism, in which you exercise your wallet's purchasing power as you see fit, here you're forced to bid on factories, dealerships, and garages when the city decides to hold an auction. Isn't this a form of socialism? And even if your company is failing badly, banks will still provide decent loans at low interest rates. There are no penalties for running a slipshod company.

Distribution is also a problem. Not only are you very limited in the number of vehicles each dealership can sell, but selling off old inventory in order to supply them with new vehicles is seldom easy. For instance, there's a bug that prevents you from supplying new models to a dealership slot that was previously used for a different model, even if there are zero vehicles appearing in the slot. How lame.

Car Tycoon's financial model misfires like a Yugo.

After a few years of game time, the interface gets more confusing. Even though everything is accessible with a click of the mouse, the game menus are limited in function and scope. As your empire grows, accessing multiple plants, dealerships, and garages devolves into a scavenger hunt as you desperately try to locate your property somewhere on the map. This game screams for pull-down menus and in-game reports where you could easily access multiple assets. The graphics are bland even for a sim-style game. Zooming in and out is a waste of time, and scrolling across the map is problematic. The only positive is *Car Tycoon*'s '50s-style music.

Bugs are also a constant source of frustration: Stock market shares and research parts magically disappear from your portfolio, and car parts that you've already researched become mysteriously inaccessible. What's even worse are the excruciatingly long load times when starting a new game or reloading a saved one. At one point, the game bloated the TEMP folder to a whopping 800MB, in addition to the 900MB it already uses.

The combination of wretched design, brainless financial models, and buggy gameplay leaves you with the realization that you got suckered into buying a lemon. All things considered, *Car Tycoon* is a game that you're best off leaving at the junkyard.

VERDICT ★½☆☆☆☆

Experience the same frustration DeLorean did while trying to build his car empire.

Codename: Outbreak

Mystery Science Gaming 3000

By Thierry Nguyen

PUBLISHER: Virgin Interactive DEVELOPER: GSC Game World Co. GENRE: Tactical simulation URL: www.codenameoutbreak.com ESRB RATING: Teen; blood, violence PRICE: $19.95

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 266, 128MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM drive RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III 500, 8X CD-ROM drive MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN, Internet (2-16 players)



After I've sniped this fool, I merely have to flip a switch and change barrels over to my rocket launcher.

Bad games are all too common nowadays, but rare is the laughably bad game in the style of *Plan 9 from Outer Space* or *The She-Gods of Shark Reef*. Most bad games are too painful to actually play, but *Codename: Outbreak* manages to give just enough charm and quirkiness to make for an experience akin to watching *Manos: The Hands of Fate* on *MST3K*.

Embracing the goofiest of sci-fi clichés, the game puts you in as a bad-ass, armored military man to investigate some meteors chock-full of alien spores. You zip through 14 missions after choosing a teammate to accompany you for a jaunt at killing alien-possessed fellows and saving the world from the alien menaces.

It plays like a dumbed-down version of *Rainbow Six* or *Quake* with tactical elements added. Each soldier in your group has stats and skills that grow over time, but you can take only one with you per mission.

It plays like a dumbed-down version of *Rainbow Six* or *Quake* with tactical elements.

Basic commands give you a modicum of control over your buddy, as you and he attempt to fulfill objectives like "kill everyone" or "kill everyone except this scientist." The pathfinding for your AI buddies wholly depends on whether there are obstacles in the way. The enemy AI itself is the standard FPS-goon fare.

Outbreak should get recognition for having one of the most bizarre weapons in any shooter. It features a large, multi-purpose gun—rather than switching between a pistol, an assault rifle, a sniper rifle, and a rocket launcher, you simply switch between barrels. So you spend most of the game looking at the exact same weapon model, but with a different barrel depending on what you switch to. I'm not sure whether this is an extrapolation from the trend toward making more all-in-one rifles or the result of a small weapon-model budget.

Add to that the so-so engine (it's decent at rendering outdoor areas but offers dated-looking textures) and the horrid—even by gaming standards—voice acting, and you have a mediocre game. Then again, there's co-op mode in the campaign, so maybe you can convince a friend to join you for this B-grade gaming ride.



My power-armored buddy here is a decent shot, but if there is a bush or rock or crate in his way, he'll take his sweet time to get around it.

VERDICT ★★½☆☆

You can blow 20 bucks on a B-grade sci-fi flick or on this B-grade sci-fi tac sim—they're equally cheesy.

The Amazing Virtual Sea Monkeys

The amazingly (disappointing), virtually (tedious) sea monkeys

By Dawn Jepsen

PUBLISHER: Xicat Interactive DEVELOPER: Creature Labs GENRE: Strategy URL: www.virtualseamonkeys.com ESRB RATING: Everyone PRICE: $19.99

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 233, 32MB RAM, 150MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 400, 64MB RAM MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None



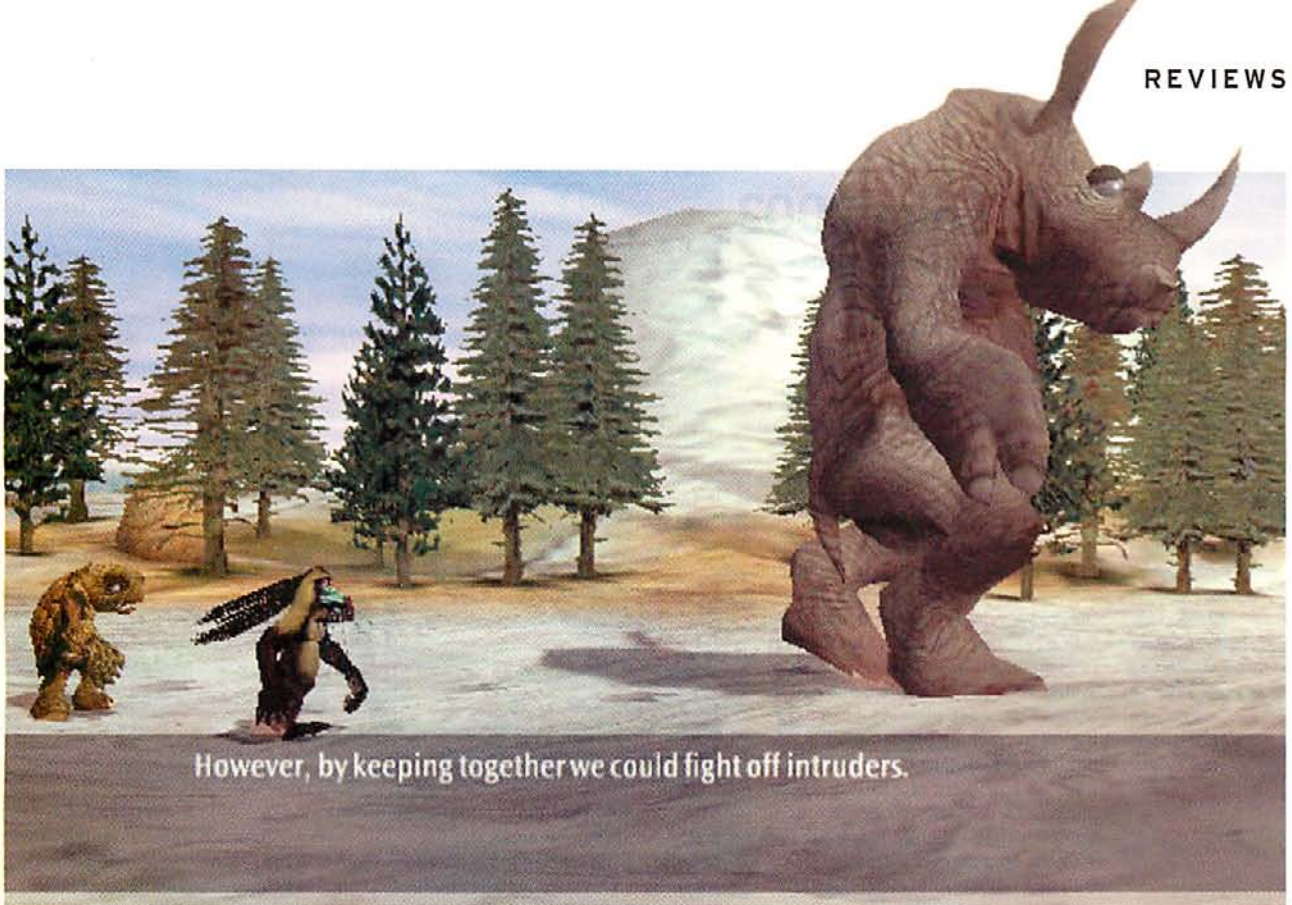
A female sea monkey gets a check-up from the AquaLeash. At least the creatures look like they do on the game box.

Fans of the *Creatures* games hoped Creature Labs could pull off another clever sim with *The Amazing Virtual Sea Monkeys*. Sadly, playing *Monkeys* sparked the same disappointment as a fish bowl of the invisible brine-shrimp versions.

Newly hatched sea monkeys spend much of their time swimming around and acclimating to their environment. They depend on you for nourishment but otherwise interact with you little. The aquarium contains clams that open to reveal pearls hidden inside, which can be used to purchase items for the tank. I played for about 90 minutes, and with little effort purchased everything available. The tank must be adjusted for temperature, oxygenation, and toxicity, and the sea monkeys occasionally require oxygen, plasma, or hemoglobin to prevent death. Despite your best efforts to keep up a healthy tank, the gameplay is so limited that your sea monkeys are likely to die from utter boredom. While kids may be briefly amused, anyone over 10 should forgo this nostalgia trip.

VERDICT ★½☆☆☆

This is more a screen saver than a playable game.



This rhino is one of two new creatures. But be warned: Once you've played *Creature Isle* you may NOT take your creature back to the original *Black & White*.

Black & White Creature Isle

Black & White, without all the interesting parts By Thomas L. McDonald

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: Lionhead
GENRE: Strategy
URL: www.bwgame.com
ESRB RATING: Teen; comic mischief, violence
PRICE: $29.95

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium II 350, 64MB RAM, 430MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium III 750, 128MB RAM, 16MB Direct 3D card
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Internet, LAN (2-8 players)

Creature Isle, the first add-on disc for *Black & White*, not only fails to rectify some of the central gameplay problems of the original, it also thrusts gamers even deeper into some of its dodgier elements. The gods are gone, along with almost any vestige of the strategic element. Instead, a lone creature finds himself on the titular island, where other masterless creatures have gathered to form the Brotherhood. New creatures are welcomed into the Brotherhood, but they first must pass a series of trials, which are little more than minigames. It's here that *Creature Isle* goes horribly awry.



Lionhead puts their worst foot forward with this pointless exercise in hand-cursor control. The slow pacing of each task adds to the pain.

The introductory movies are long and slow, punctuated by the nattering angel and devil advisors from the original. When you finally gain control of the creature, you must tackle several trials. I began with bowling against the cow, and I couldn't have made a worse choice. The bowling mechanism involves picking up an inscribed stone and lamely tossing it down a narrow pitch toward some pins. Your creature then attempts to knock down these pins by rolling a ball toward your rock. It's awkward and frustrating.

The god-battling strategic element of the original is simply gone.

And it doesn't stop there. You get to play marbles, herd sheep, kick a ball, play hide-and-seek, and waste endless amounts of time with similar games. Requiring deft input from the Hand (which isn't very responsive or precise), all 20 minigames far outstay their welcome. Aside from completing the trials, your creature must also rear Tyke, a little chick that is his pet. If you teach your creature well, he'll in turn teach Tyke, who will grow and mature much like the creature. Since you can't actually manipulate or train Tyke yourself, it's all rather abstract and unfulfilling. If you do everything right, the creature will find true love with Eve, a female creature.

Some new creatures and miracles add to the value of the package, but not by much. The rhino and crocodile join the original creatures, and there are two new miracles, one to dispel magic and one to provide speed boost. Nice, but not enough. The god-battling strategic element of the original is simply gone. In its place is a protracted software Tamogochi. It may have spectacular AI, but it's still just an elaborate virtual pet forced to perform a tedious sequence of often-frustrating tasks.

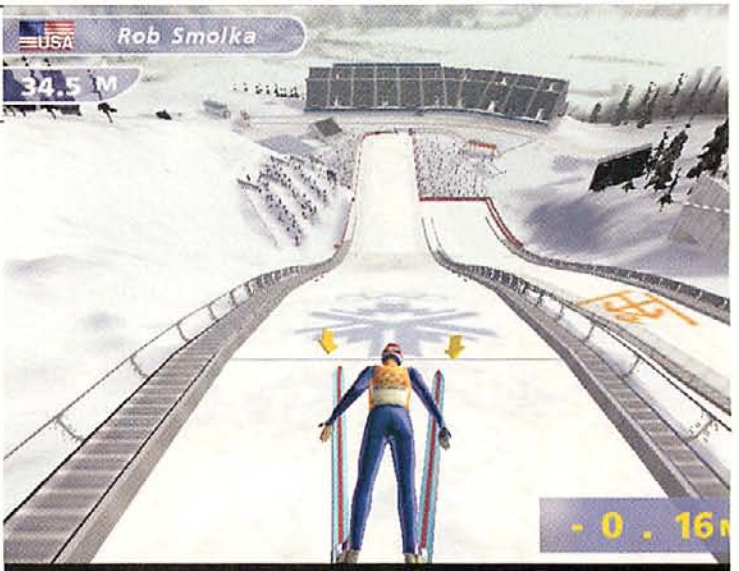
For strategy tips on Creature Isle, *go to page 110.*

VERDICT ★1/2☆☆☆☆

***Creature Isle* changes a strategy game into a sequence of menial tasks of almost brain-shattering dullness.**

Salt Lake 2002

Bronze at best **By Rob Smolka**



If you ever wanted to know what it's like to fly the length of a football field, here's your chance!

PUBLISHER: **Eidos Interactive** DEVELOPER: **ATD** GENRE: **Sports** CONTACT: **www.eidosinteractive.com** ESRB RATING: **Everyone** PRICE: **$29.99**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM, 300MB hard drive space, 16MB 3D video card** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **1GHz Pentium III, 256MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space, 32MB 3D video card** MULTIPLAYER: **Hotseat (2-4 players)**

If the effort given forth by our Olympic athletes had been as mediocre and inconsistent as the effort put into *Salt Lake 2002*, we'd have been lucky to come away with our pride intact, much less a truckload of medals. While it's not a complete disaster or merely a blatant attempt to take advantage of Olympic-mania (the game was released just prior to the start of the games), the grand total of six events feels rather skimpy, and they're very uneven in how well they play.

One problem that *Salt Lake 2002* has to overcome is its outrageously high system requirements. The game is actually quite eye-pleasing if you have the rig to crank up the detail settings, but if you're struggling along with less than the equivalent of a 1GHz processor and a GeForce2-powered video card, things can get unsightly. My pitiful 700MHz Thunderbird, with a GeForce DDR and 640MB RAM didn't cut the mustard; in order to get an acceptable frame-rate, I had to settle for Picasso-style trees, spectators that resembled animated paper bags, and flat textures that harkened back to pre-Pentium days.

The events vary from quick and fun to long and tedious.

The events vary from quick and fun to long and tedious. The downhill skiing takes some practice to master, but the controls are good enough to allow you to maneuver through the widely spaced gates, and the sensation of speed is pretty convincing. Ski jumping is fun because it plays quickly and is easy to learn. Slalom runs are probably quite enjoyable if you're actually on skis or a snowboard, but here they're too slow and require more fine-tuned control than the game can deliver. The skiing aerials use a "tap the key or directional pad at the right time" control scheme, but it's not very responsive, and as a result that event is extremely frustrating. The two-man bobsled ends up being a fight to keep the thing from flipping over before you reach the bottom. Control is minimal (as I'm sure it is in the real world), but the game doesn't convey the thrill it must be to actually be in one of these potential death-machines, careening your way down a sheet of ice with little more than a helmet to protect you.

Salt Lake 2002 should get some credit for making you feel like you're at the games themselves. The camera work is well done and the announcers are rather good. It's too bad that more effort wasn't put into the gameplay.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

Nice presentation, but the quality of the few events included is too inconsistent.

Baseball Mogul 2002

The business of baseball **By Rob Smolka**



It ain't much to look at, but there's a lot of solid sports biz strategy packed in there.

PUBLISHER: **Sports Mogul, Inc.** DEVELOPER: **Sports Mogul, Inc.** GENRE: **Strategy** CONTACT: **www.sportsmogul.com** ESRB RATING: **Everyone** PRICE: **$29.99**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium 100, 16MB RAM, 80MB hard drive space** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium 200, 32MB RAM** MULTIPLAYER: **None**

The main focus of this text-based game is more on the running of a baseball franchise than the nuts and bolts of on-field strategy. In fact, you can't even watch the games in progress, much less have a direct hand in their outcomes. What you do have control over is the makeup of your roster, the tendencies of your manager, and the financial responsibility that comes with running a major league outfit.

What makes *Baseball Mogul* work is the true-to-life way that the players respond (the stat engine has improved dramatically over past iterations), and the cut-throat nature and baseball savvy of your fellow GMs. Trying to create a winning team through trades and the draft is remarkably compelling, making it all the more rewarding when your team finally has all the parts in place to make a run for the championship. Also nice is that this version is an officially licensed product of MLB, so no more cheesily disguised player names.

There are still a few things that could be improved. Moving players around is tedious, and it would be nice to be notified when a player comes off the disabled list. Also, the inclusion of left- and right-handed split stats would add to the overall strategy. But these changes would only serve to make this excellent game even better.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

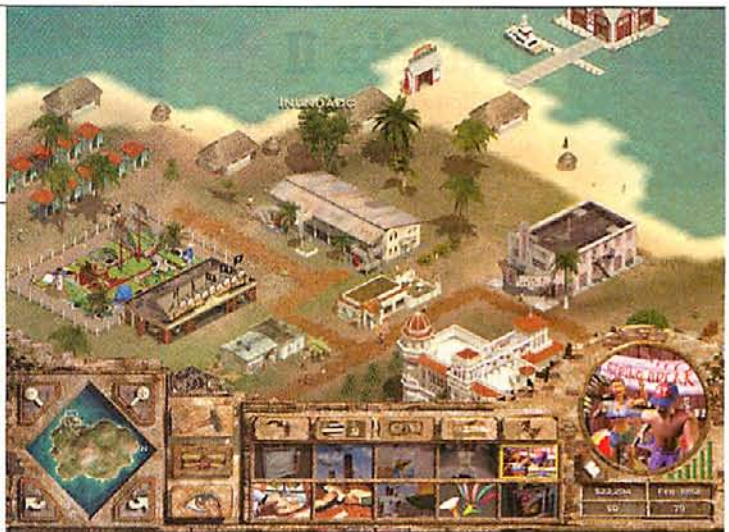
A little too dry for casual fans, but baseball junkies will eat it up.

Tropico: Paradise Island

There's a teensy bit new under the sun **By Tom Chick**

PUBLISHER: **Take Two** DEVELOPER: **Breakaway Games** GENRE: **Strategy** URL: **www.take2games.com** ESRB RATING: **Teen; suggestive themes, violence** PRICE: **$19.99**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 200, 32MB RAM, 800MB hard drive space** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **64MB RAM** MULTIPLAYER: **None**



Spring break tourists are carefree with what little money they have, especially when you build them a pub.

Here's an idea: Add tropical storms to *Tropico*. Every now and then, these horrible forces of nature sweep across your island, raking it with violent winds and torrential rain. Actually, the camera just zooms out while a wind sound plays. Then some of your buildings are randomly destroyed. Hurricane over. When you regain the controls, you get to guess what each pile of rubble used to be. Was it a rum distillery or just a corn farm? Have fun. Your dock is particularly vulnerable to being trashed by a hurricane. If you can't afford a new dock, the game is shut down as there's no way to make any more money.

An expansion pack like this will make you ask "Is that all?"

Many of *Paradise Island*'s other additions to *Tropico* seem just as poorly thought out. During the epidemic, a bunch of your people keel over and die, leaving you to puzzle out the sudden employee shortages. There are new tourist subcategories and new buildings to make them happy, but this is tantamount to adding different varieties of timber for your lumber mill: It's additional busy work that doesn't add anything significant to the gameplay.

Among the new scenarios are several you can download from the Internet. Of the dozen new buildings, many seem redundant. Most of the new edicts are mild at best. For instance, you can "capture" a political opponent in your dungeon instead of "arresting" him in your prison.

The best improvements to the game make it easier to play as the leader of an oppressive regime. You can now back out of a bad election with the Martial Law edict or by taking out the opposing candidate. Changes to the military make it easier to put down insurgencies or beat back attacking rebels. Although construction time is faster, a more noticeable improvement is that you don't have to manually bulldoze shacks when you're placing new buildings. Additional buildings can be rotated to align with your road network, but many of the bigger important buildings are fixed at one orientation.



Keep the military happy and well-trained with the new army base.

Paradise Island is one of those disappointing additions that's barely a step above a patch. An expansion pack like this makes you ask "Is that all?"

VERDICT ★★½☆☆

***Paradise Island* is more patchwork than expansion.**

GAME PATCHES

Revisionist History

By Thomas L. McDonald

EA.com's *Motor City Online*

Motor City Online **may be the game that forces us to come up with some standard for calling a game massively multiplayer. *Motor City* is more like modestly multiplayer. Two months after launch, it remains a ghost town. I spot-checked it every night for a week and found anywhere from 500 people during peak hours to as few as a couple dozen off-peak.**

Frankly, none of them seem to get the point of the game. The point is to race other humans for money to build a boss car. So why do the majority of gamers cluster around the Sponsored Car area, where you race someone else's car, or in Time Trials, where you race alone? Only about 20 percent of those online seem to be racing or looking to race.

As for bugs and fine-tuning issues, EA.com has been diligently patching, with fairly decent results. It's still not great looking, but at least frame-rates have improved. The best addition is a Test Install option in the parts-buying menu, which lays out in specific detail what a new part will do to a car's performance. This was a vitally needed feature, and it integrates fluidly with the buying menu.

Other areas still need work. If there's a way to tell what someone's ping is before you agree to a race, I have yet to find it. My Force Feedback support didn't work at all, and a colleague suffered dramatic frame-rate drop until he disabled his. I also continue to hear about people jumping the green start light without penalty. Documentation is a joke.



Even fixed, however, it's not inspiring enough dedicated gamers to sustain an effective online game. Its days are numbered.

CGW *gave* MCO *a 2-star rating in March 2002.*

Grandia II

Good non-*Final Fantasy* game, bad non-*Final Fantasy* port **By Thierry Nguyen**

PUBLISHER: **Ubi Soft**
DEVELOPER: **Game Arts Co.**
GENRE: **Console RPG**
URL: **www.ubi.com/US/Games/grandia2**
ESRB RATING: **Teen; mild animated violence, mild language** PRICE: **$39.99**

REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 850MB hard drive space** RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: **Pentium III 600 or higher, 128MB RAM**
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: **None**

Whether you'll like this game wholly depends on your opinion of the legendary *Final Fantasy* series by Squaresoft. If you think the series is one of the true pioneers in gaming storytelling, intriguing gameplay, and amazing production values, read on. If, however, you think the series produces overwrought, overrated exercises in melodrama dressed up in annoying combat, linear storytelling, and weirdo Japanese aesthetics, then I'd recommend that you go ahead and turn the page. While this game isn't a *Final Fantasy* title per se, it's a port of a very *FF*-style console RPG.

Originally a DreamCast game, *Grandia II* is actually one of the better console RPGs that doesn't sport the *Final Fantasy* label, with one of the best and most innovative battle systems for the genre and a protagonist who voices the same concerns that the player has. Unlike in *FF* games, in *Grandia* you are able to see the enemy before you engage (no more random battles), and while the action is at its core turn-based, factors such as speed, distance, evasive/defensive tactics, initiative, and casting time play a huge role in your success. Because of the increased tactical considerations, combat is much more complex than just holding down the attack button; you also had better figure out how to coordinate, time, and execute the actions of your party, which can have up to four members (six distinct characters float in and out during the storyline).

The storyline, although essentially another goofy melodrama, is kept interesting by the running commentary of the sarcastic Ryudo character. He remarks on everything from the whiny Elena character to the clichéd phrase, "The Battle of Good and Evil." Don't think you will be able to barrel through this storyline in just one night; it takes at least 25 hours to get through, if not 30 or 40. Just when you think the game is over, out comes another extension to the quest that keeps you going. In fact, it almost feels *too* long at times.

The only real difference between the PC port and the DreamCast original is the graphical quality. The high-resolution graphics mainly result in many characters and locations looking cleaner and less jaggy, due to superior PC hardware. The textures, however, are still pretty low res, so it's mostly the visuals of the characters that benefit from the high-res treatment.

Heed one huge warning: This game does not officially support Windows XP. Take that to mean that if you have XP, do not play it. Even in compatibility mode, the game wouldn't run videos, which has a major impact on the game—not only are there lots of cut-scenes to advance the story, but a video plays for most of the high-level spells in combat. To be absolutely safe, you should run this on a Win 98/ME system only.

Even when working, this game won't make converts from PC RPGs to console ones. It's a shame, because it is a really solid game. However, the great battle system, the witty main characters, and the play length aren't enough to overcome the lackluster graphical updates and the fact that the game doesn't really work for anyone who has bought a computer since October of last year. Maybe you can sponge a used copy and an old DreamCast off someone instead.



It is amusing to play such a smug and sarcastic fellow, and the high-res graphics make the whole game look a lot cleaner compared to its DreamCast counterpart.

Huge warning: This game doesn't officially support Windows XP. Take that to mean that if you have XP, do not play it.


The general worldview is from high up—a rotating camera illustrates the weird and wonky towns and wilderness areas you'll game through.



The battle system looks nice and plays great, requiring much more tactical precision and thought than most other console RPGs.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

A refreshing console RPG yarn, but only for those console RPG fans who haven't upgraded to Windows XP yet.



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GeForce4 Rev



128MB GEFORCE4 TI 4600

Just when you thought it was safe to jump aboard the Titanium bandwagon, Nvidia releases the GeForce4

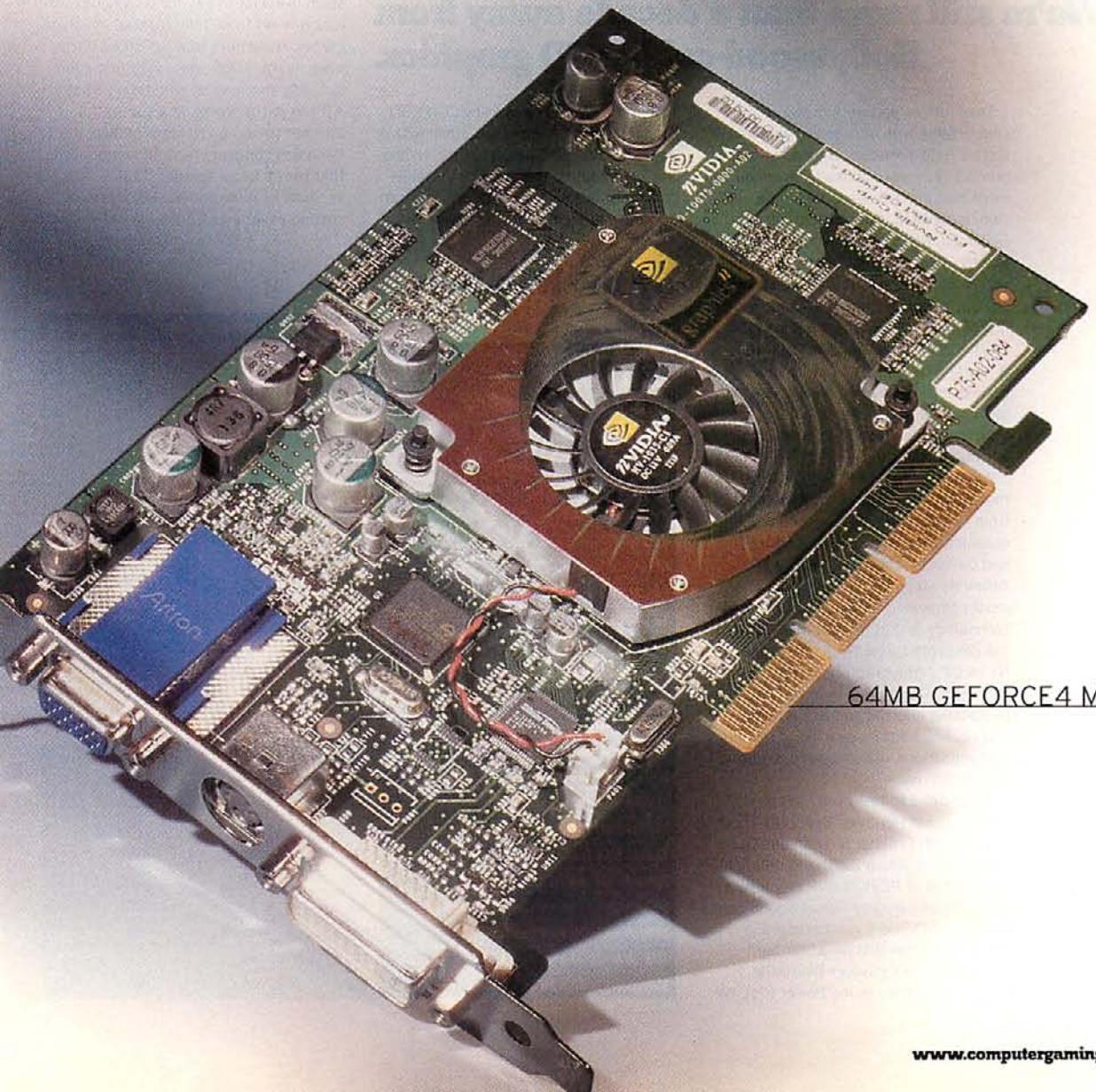
By William O'Neal

Not too long ago—in the waning months of 2000—you were happy whiling away the hours gaming with a screaming fast 64MB GeForce2 Ultra. "My lord," you thought to yourself, "it can't get any better than this." Then lo and behold, Nvidia released their vaunted 64MB GeForce3 in early 2001. And all of a sudden, those happy GeForce2 Ultra gaming hours had become extended bouts of techno-envy as your buddies lorded their ample graphics technology over you.

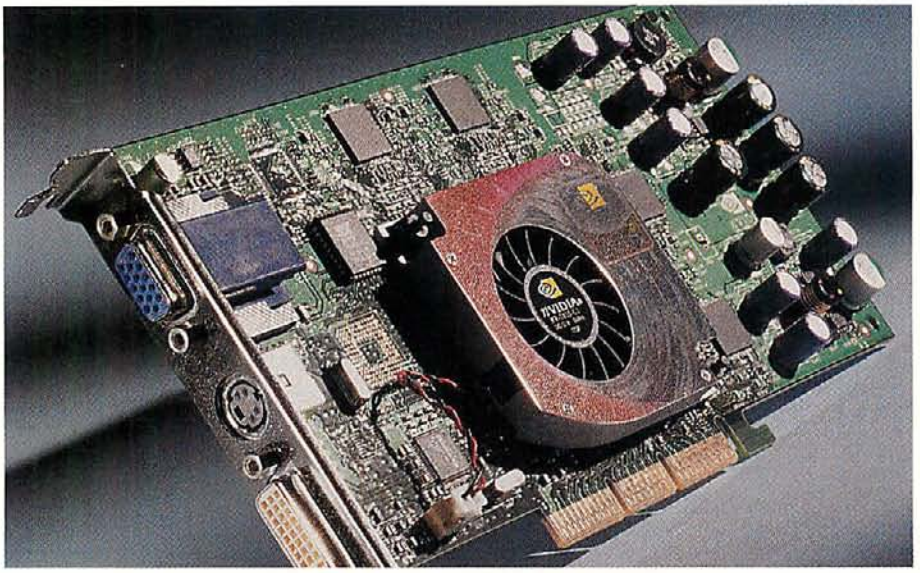
"I'll show them," you muttered to yourself, and by the time you were ready to jump onboard, Nvidia released the Titanium line of GeForce3 cards. Sweet! You anted up the cash and splurged on a top-of-the-line 64MB GeForce3 Ti 500 card. And once again, you were the king of the technology hill.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARNOLD TIOSEJO

olution!



64MB GEFORCE4 MX 460



We're still more than a decade away from Hollywood-caliber 3D graphics.

Then just as you were growing comfortable with your newly acquired status, Nvidia reached their six-month product rev mark and made an announcement that in many ways was more significant than that of the original GeForce3: NV25, better known as the 128MB GeForce4, was on the way. While you may be inclined to fret, don't. We got our hands on both the flagship 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 and its little brother, the 64MB GeForce4 MX 460. And while the GeForce4 kicks some serious ass, the overwhelming lack of DirectX 8 titles means that–for the time being–you won't be feeling too left out.

While Nvidia is the first to admit that we're more than a decade away from real-time Hollywood-caliber 3D graphics, the GeForce4 4600 (NV25) and GeForce4 MX 460 (NV17) are definitely steps in that direction. The most compelling thing about GeForce4 technology is that it takes many of the concepts currently in use by the NV2A GPU (the graphics power behind Microsoft's Xbox), like dual-vertex processing engines and its particle engine, and adds its own list of unique customizations, like improved memory-bandwidth usage.

We decided to test both GeForce4 cards against Hercules' GeForce3 Ti 500 card, the 3D Prophet III Titanium. Our test platform was a 2.2GHz Pentium 4 with 512MB of PC2100 DDR memory, a SoundBlaster Audigy Gamer sound card, an ASUS A7V266-E motherboard, a 30GB 7200-rpm IBM DeskStar hard drive, and a 16X Pioneer DVD-ROM drive (also known as my Power Rig). We tested the various cards using *CGW*'s 3D GameGauge 2.5, MadOnion's 3DMark2001, and Ziff Davis' 3DWinBench2000. Nvidia has been touting the GeForce4's ability to handle various flavors of antialiasing so we performed all of these tests using standard, 4x, and Quincunx AA, as well as the newer 4xS AA. We also ran many of the tests at higher resolutions like 1600x1200 at 32-bit.

When run at 3DMark2001's default settings, 1024x768x32 with no AA, the GeForce4 Ti 4600 achieved a score of 10127! Compare that to the scores of 8073 and 6200 that the GeForce3 Ti 500 and GeForce4 MX 460 scored respectively. Thoroughly impressed, we decided to run these same tests with the various flavors of AA turned on, and this was when the GeForce4 Ti 4600 really began to pull away. At 1024x768x32 with Quincunx AA enabled, the GeForce4 Ti 4600 scored 8655 in 3DMark2001 while the GeForce3 Ti 500 and GeForce4 MX 460 scored 5407 and 4189.

Expect the flagship GeForce4 Ti 4600 to have a street price anywhere between $399 and $499 and the lesser GeForce4 MX 460 to cost somewhere around $149. While nearly $500 may seem like a lot to pay for technology that has yet to be fully realized in actual games, remember that GeForce2 Ultras were nearly $600 when they first came out. You also may be wondering what ATI has in the works. In a successful attempt to rain on Nvidia's parade, the Canadian company recently announced that they'll begin shipping 128MB versions of their Radeon 8500, some costing as little as $199.

By the Numbers

TEST	GeForce3 Ti 500	GeForce4 Ti 4600	GeForce4 MX 460
Quake III: Arena 1024x768x16	204	208	180
Quake III: Arena 1024x768x32	200	206	175
Quake III: Arena 1600x1200x32	114	131	82
Unreal Tournament 1024x768x16	46	64	61
Expendable 16-bit	97	97	104
Expendable 32-bit	96	95	101
Re-Volt 1024x768x16	287	281	272
Re-Volt 1024x768x32	288	282	231
NFL Fever 16-bit	84	98	99
Panzer Elite 16-bit	29	29	30
3D GameGauge 2.5	115	122	112
3DWinMark2000	276	299	199
3DMark2001 1024x768x32	8073	10127	6200
Quake III: Arena 1600x1200x32 with Quincunx AA	41	61	29
Quake III: Arena 1600x1200x32 with 4x AA	50	68	37
Quake III: Arena 1600x1200x32 with 4xS AA	N/A	68	37
3DMark2001 1024x768x32 with Quincunx AA	5407	8655	4189
3DMark2001 1024x768x32 with 4x AA	3609	5856	2311
3DMark2001 1024x768x32 with 4xS AA	N/A	5513	2326
3DMark2001 1600x1200x32 with Quincunx AA	2777	3934	3581
3DMark2001 1600x1200x32 with 4x AA	4692	2694	2110
3DMark2001 1600x1200x32 with 4xS AA	N/A	4257	2112
3DWinMark2000 with Quincunx AA	114	235	110
3DWinMark2000 with 4x AA	73	119	56
3DWinMark2000 with 4xS AA	N/A	117	56



Hewlett-Packard Pavilion 9995

Disappointing graphics detract from this system's DVD-RW drive and nice extras **By Ken Feinstein**

MANUFACTURER: **Hewlett-Packard**
URL: **www.hp.com**
PRICE: **$1,849**

SPECS: **2GHz Pentium 4, 80GB hard drive, 512MB SDRAM, 64MB GeForce2 MX 400 graphics card, DVD-RW drive, 15-inch monitor, USB and FireWire ports**

All you PC makers out there heed our simple plea: Whatever you do, please please *please* do not skimp on the graphics. Hewlett-Packard's Pavilion 9995 delivers impressive features like a built-in DVD-RW drive and tight component integration. But we couldn't leave the included graphics card in place for more than a few hours before we cracked the case to replace it with a card that had more bit-chewing brawn. And who really wants a PC that you have to upgrade the moment you get home?

Who wants a PC that you have to upgrade the moment you get home?

After spending so much time with home-built systems cobbled together from mismatched parts, we find there's something comforting about a fully integrated mass-market PC like the Pavilion. For one thing, its stylish gray color is coordinated across all the peripherals, including the Polk audio speakers, which attach on the sides of the slightly small (only 15.8 inches viewable area) monitor. The front of the Pavilion's case has easily accessible USB, FireWire, and serial ports, and the illuminated keyboard offers a full array of programmable buttons, including a large volume knob. We also appreciated the USB optical mouse, perfect for fast-twitch action games.

Beyond all of these niceties, it's the built-in DVD100i DVD-RW drive that sets this system apart. The drive can record data onto rewritable 4.7GB DVD-RW discs, an ideal method for making backups or transporting large files. The surprisingly easy-to-use MyDVD software lets you create DVDs from any video files you have stored on your PC. But note that the DVD-RW format isn't compatible with all DVD players. The drive does double-duty as a CD-R drive, and the system also includes a second DVD-ROM drive and an 80GB hard drive.

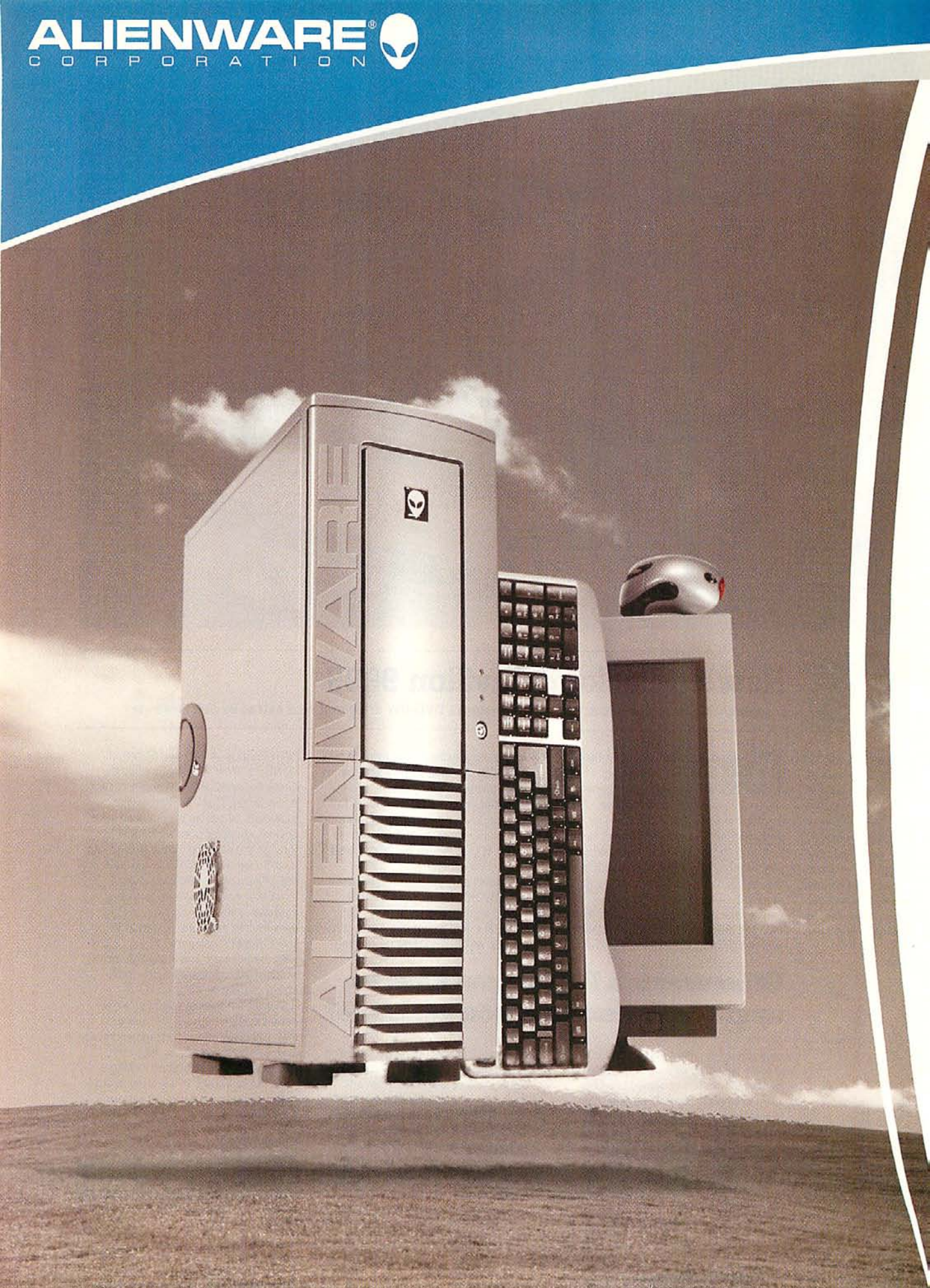
In terms of performance, the Pavilion's 2GHz Pentium 4 CPU and 512MB of 133MHz SDRAM were hobbled by its 64MB GeForce2 MX 400 graphics card. When we ran *Castle Wolfenstein* at 1024x768, 32-bit, we experienced very obvious choppiness as we wandered through the corridors of the Nazi stronghold. So we swapped in a VisionTek Xtasy 6964 GeForce3 Ti 500 card in order to let this machine live up to its full potential. With the new card, the rig delivered an excellent 3DMark2001 score of 6475, compared to only 2520 with the old card, and a 3DWinBench score of 212, compared to the initial sluggish score of 77.

Overall, HP has put together a competent system in the 9995, and the DVD-RW drive offers outstanding backup and archival capabilities. But in the end, there's no way around it: With a price tag of $1,849, this system needs better graphics to make it a serious gaming rig.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

This rig offers nice features and integration, but it lacks cutting-edge graphics.

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Hewlett-Packard OmniBook 6100

Powerful notebook with built-in wireless networking By Ken Feinstein

MANUFACTURER: Hewlett-Packard
URL: www.hp.com
PRICE: $2,827

SPECS: 1.13GHz Pentium III, 30GB hard drive, 256MB SDRAM, 16MB ATI Mobility Radeon graphics card, DVD-ROM drive, 15-inch SXGA TFT monitor, S-video port with TV-out

Hewlett-Packard shows real finesse with the OmniBook 6100, offering a solid notebook with a design that's both thoughtful and thorough. It's so lightweight, and the screen is so beautiful, and the features are so complete that it only needs slightly faster graphics to make it a gamer's dream machine. As it stands, this laptop is a bit underpowered for those who play graphics-intensive action games and simulations, but for everyone else, the OmniBook 6100 offers a sweet-and-light package that's hard to resist.

Take one look at OmniBook's 15-inch SXGA+ screen and you'll be ruined. A screen that big, bright, and clear makes flickery CRT displays look like eye-torture devices. The keyboard is equally pleasurable, with a smooth, solid feel, a pointing stick in the middle for cursor control, as well as a touchpad down below on the comfortable hand rest. Despite the large screen, the unit weighs only 5 pounds, but that's without a floppy drive—if you need one, you'll have to purchase it separately. Our unit came equipped with a DVD-ROM drive, but we'd recommend the DVD/CD-RW combo that's available for only an additional $99.

This notebook also delivers an impressive array of connectivity options. In addition to the built-in modem and ethernet adapter, there's an 802.11b wireless network adapter built right into the hand rest. There's even an on-off switch with a status light, a great security feature that lets you easily disable wireless networking when not in use. As wireless networks become ever more popular at home, in the office, and even in airports, hotels, and coffee shops, this is a feature that will grow in usefulness over the years.

A screen that big, bright, and clear makes flickery CRT displays look like eye-torture devices.

On 3DMark2001, the OmniBook scored only 1521, compared to 2000 scored by a similarly equipped system using the GeForce2Go chip and 3200 that the Dell Inspiron with a 64MB ATI Mobility Radeon scored. *Counter-Strike* was certainly playable on the OmniBook, though it was a bit hesitant at a resolution of 1024x768, and we noticed a few visual glitches.

Priced at $2,827, the HP OmniBook 6100 is an expensive investment, but its features and thoughtful design make it a compelling option for those who need their notebooks for both work and play. Hardcore action gamers, however, should wait for a notebook with ATI's Mobility Radeon 7500 or get one with Nvidia's 32MB GeForce2Go.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

An excellent notebook, but not for hardcore action gamers.



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Cordless Gamepad Street Fight

Logitech and Wingman unplug PC gaming

By Raphael Liberatore



COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

MANUFACTURER: Thrustmaster
URL: www.thrustmaster.com
REQUIREMENTS: PC 133MHz or faster with USB port, Windows 98/ME/2000, SVGA video card with 256+ colors, 16MB RAM, 15MB hard drive space, CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive
PRICE: $39.99
VERDICT: ★★★★½

MANUFACTURER: Logitech
URL: www.logitech.com
REQUIREMENTS: Intel Pentium or AMD-K6 processor or faster, Windows 98/ME/2000, 16MB RAM, 15MB hard drive space, CD-ROM drive, USB port, DirectX 7
PRICE: $49.99
VERDICT: ★★★★½

Thrustmaster and Logitech are both known for quality input devices. With the world of wireless PC products hitting full stride, both manufacturers have jumped on the bandwagon and now offer cordless variants of their already celebrated gamepad designs. Thrustmaster's Firestorm uses 900MHz radio-frequency technology for up to 15 feet of distance, while Logitech uses 2.4GHz RF spread for up to 20 feet away.

Both gamepads offer similar quick and easy installation schemes. Insert the installation disks provided, restart your PC, and then plug the devices' receivers into your USB port. Calibrate them and you're ready to configure. Configuration of the Firestorm and Wingman for particular games is where these gamepads diverge.

Thrustmaster's Thrustmapper software allows you to use preset configurations assigned from previous Thrustmaster gamepad products. If this is the first time you're using a Thrustmaster gamepad on your PC, then you can preconfigure games by launching the Thrustmapper software, clicking on the game's executable file (.exe), and assigning buttons to the game's functions.

Logitech offers a slightly different route through its Wingman Profiler software. The Wingman Profiler detects games already profiled and maps them with default settings. Creating profiles is also a snap. If you can't find a game in the profiler, or if you're too lazy to configure your own, Logitech offers a slew of preconfigured profiles for download from their Website.

Playing everything from *NASCAR 4* and *High Heat Baseball 2001* to *Aliens vs. Predator 2* and *Operation Flashpoint* proved that both gamepads are more than capable of handling your needs. Both are well designed, feel great, and have easy-to-navigate buttons, D-pads, and ministicks. While the Firestorm sports a rubberized texture, adding a cozy grip to its already comfortable design, the Wingman offers vibration effects that can be modified to suit different games. The Wingman also uses a power-save feature, so batteries won't drain as quickly when idle.

However, while both Thrustmaster and Logitech claim that their gamepads can be used at extended ranges from the receiver, I found this to be overstated since neither performed well at the distances claimed. The Firestorm hit a wall at 10 feet, where game commands began to act erratic, while the Wingman maintained clarity at a slightly longer distance. But let's get real—who is going to be playing a game 20 feet from their PC unless they have a 32-inch wide-screen monitor? The Wingman lets you connect up to eight gamepads to your PC without RF interference, while the Firestorm supports four.

Overall, both the Thrustmaster Firestorm and Logitech Wingman are excellent cordless gamepads, offering slightly unique features to differentiate their value. It really boils down to which features matter at which price. But if you're ready to jump on the cordless bandwagon, you'll be pleased with either choice.

Both gamepads are more than capable of handling your gaming needs.

VERDICT ★★★★½

These cordless gamepads kick major ass, but don't stray too far from the computer, because range and clarity can get a bit testy.



iRiver iMP3-350 SlimX

A great little all-in-one CD player for you Morpheus freaks out there **By Thierry Nguyen**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

MANUFACTURER iRiver America URL www.iriveramerica.com RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS A fast CD-RW burner PRICE $199.99

Even though the RIAA doesn't like it, MP3s are still around. However, if you want to listen to Shakira's new joint *Laundry Service* on the go, you have to spring for either a memory-stick, a SmartMedia-based player like a Rio, or a bulky monstrosity like Creative's 20GB Nomad Jukebox. Then again, maybe it's time for a good all-in-one solution, like the iMP3-350 SlimX.

Barely thicker than a jewel case, this third-generation CD player supports CDA, MP3, and even Microsoft's WMA and ASF formats. And support for formats like Ogg Vorbis (via firmware upgrades easily done by burning a file onto a CD-RW and putting it in the player) loom on the horizon. A whopping eight minutes of skip protection was more than just bullet text in the features list, as the SlimX was sturdy enough to handle banging around in my jacket.

The SlimX also comes with a remote that's a tad on the large side and has a bit of a learning curve. But once I figured it out, I was whipping through the different menus, EQ settings, directories, and playlists faster than Jeff Green goes through a box of Krispy Kremes. I threw in songs of all bit rates and file formats onto both CD-Rs and CD-RWs, and the SlimX played each one without a hiccup. The resume feature was great for picking up where I left off in an audio book or an MP3 of Chris Rock at the Apollo Theatre.

The SlimX doesn't come with a belt-strap, so it's hard to take it jogging—not that any of us here are inclined to do that. Also, the included rechargeable batteries tend to last for about 10 hours before needing a recharge (we were pleased that it even came with batteries).

The price for the SlimX is a bit higher than for other players, but for the slim yet sturdy construction, the supported audio formats, and the digital FM tuner, this is a fantastic CD player and a really convenient way to take all of your "legitimate" music on the road.

VERDICT ★★★★★

A great CD player that's better than a memory-stick-based player but won't hurt your wallet or pocket space like a hard drive-based player.



WIL POWER

By William O'Neal

The Miseducation of Wil O'Neal: Part Deux

Get the Black Guy a Muzzle!

Last year I wrote a column entitled "Don't worry too much about Xbox; it'll be obsolete in months." I followed this with the following statement: "People—us included—are all hot about Xbox. But the fact remains that PCs are gonna kick its ass...it's a no-brainer that PCs will render it obsolete in less than a year of its release."

What was I thinking? I implore you, my loyal readers, to feel free to rip me a new one every time I utter nonsense like that. Since I wrote that column nearly a year ago, I've received an Xbox as well as a debug unit, and I have to admit that I love the thing: *Halo* rocks, *NFL Fever* is great, and my son has yet to beat me at *Project Gotham Racing*.

You Really Like Laptops

In the March 2002 issue, I put together a roundup of five sweet laptops and the only other topic that's elicited as much mail is...oh wait...I've been forbidden to bring that up. Anyway, you guys seem about as psyched about gaming laptops as I am. And seeing that ATI has released a 64MB version of their Mobility Radeon, let's hope that Nvidia, too, gets with the program and ships a 64MB version of the GeForce2Go.

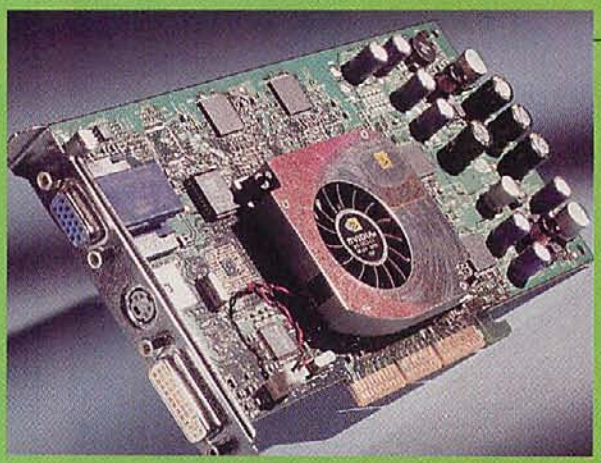
Where's the Love?

In the March 2002 issue, I wrote a column about the high cost of entry for PC gamers and how tough it is for younger gamers to come up with that kind of money. Good lord! Y'all ain't got no love for the kids! I received maybe two letters from teenagers, thanking me for bringing their plea to light. The rest of the mail was about two dozen letters from people suggesting that "the little brats should get a job like I did when I was a kid—back in the day we knew the value of a hard-earned dollar." So there you have it, poor 16-year-old gamers. From the *CGW* readers to you: Their advice is to shut up and get a damn job.

How To: Overclock Your Video

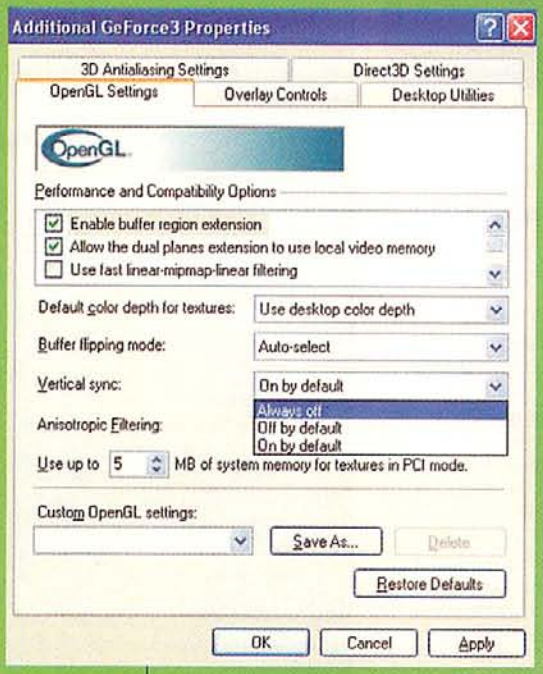
Burn, baby, burn! **By Tracy Baker**

It's that time of the year again: time for video card envy. Nvidia just released the GeForce4, your friend is bragging, and there it is in the back of your mind: To hell with shelling out that kind of cash—should I just overclock? The answer, of course, depends on your video card, resolution needs, and the size of your wallet. With that in mind, we took a VisionTek Xtasy 6964 GeForce3 Ti 500 card and overclocked it to its limits, using only stock cooling, to let you know what you're in for if you decide to do the same to your card.



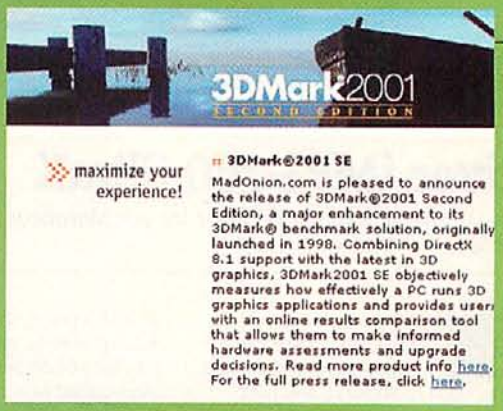
STEP #1

DO YOU REALLY NEED TO DO THIS? Nearly all cards overclock a bit, but going just a bit beyond manufacturer specs isn't going to provide a dramatic speed boost. If you have anything older than a GeForce3, consider getting a new card; you probably can't wring enough power out of it to get good performance out of today's games, especially at high resolutions. The best time to overclock is when you're in the process of saving for a new card. That way, you have a backup plan if a component on the old card is permanently damaged by heat. Also, remember your warranty disappears the moment you push that MHz slider past its factory default setting.



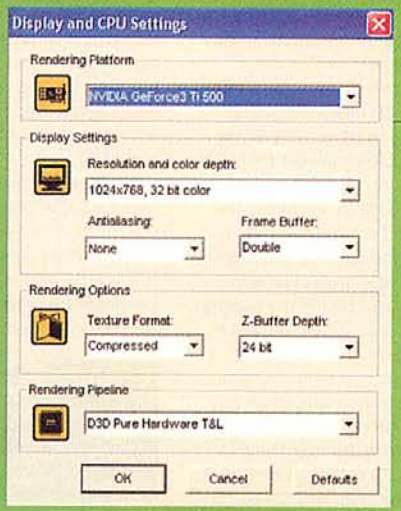
STEP #3

MAKING THE INITIAL ADJUSTMENTS Launch NVmax, click the DirectX tab on the right, and use the drop-down list to check the settings. Select Off on the Antialiasing page, set the filtering mode to Auto on the Textures page, and set Vertical sync to Off. Make sure programs that don't need to be running are shut down. Don't forget to close any unnecessary junk in the System Tray before proceeding.



STEP #2

GET YOUR SOFTWARE It's tough to test the speed of your hardware without a benchmark, so head over to MadOnion.com and grab a copy of 3DMark2001. It provides an excellent way to stress your video card, and it's a great tool for measuring performance gains when you're comparing two cards on the same system or different clock settings on the same card. You'll also need a utility that lets you bump up the clock speeds. We recommend NVmax (nvmax.com) because it offers more control than the Coolbits registry hack.



STEP #4

RUN THE BENCHMARK Load up 3DMark2001 and click the Change button in the Display and CPU Settings box. Here we recommend using 1024x768 with 32-bit color, no antialiasing, a double frame buffer, compressed or 32-bit textures, a 24-bit Z-buffer, and D3D Pure Hardware T&L. When that's configured, click the Benchmark button to warm up your card and get a baseline score. Pay attention to video quality as the test runs so you have a frame of reference later, and don't forget to record the final scores.

Card

STEP #5

OVERCLOCKING THE CORE Overclock only one component at a time so you can easily backtrack if something causes problems. Start with the core, as it usually can be pushed up only a few megahertz before it becomes unstable. Before you begin, use NVmax to turn Vsync back on (we're checking for visual quality, not benchmarking, and it's hard to differentiate sync-rate problems from signs that the core is overheating). Click the System tab and select Clocks. Move the core slider up by 5MHz and wait for the change; use the left and right arrow keys to make fine adjustments. If the system didn't lock up, load 3DMark2001. Click Change in the Selected Tests box and clear everything except Game 2 - *Dragothic*. This test provides a dark background for spotting visual artifacts and dropped textures, and the movement highlights texture-tearing problems. Click Benchmark and the *Dragothic* test will run. If the textures look odd, as if they can't keep up with the onscreen action, press backspace to halt the test. Also look for white or light-colored regions that appear as textures drop out of the scene. That's a sure sign the core is stressed, so exit 3DMark2001 immediately and turn down the core speed. If the system locks up, quickly hit the reset button and turn the core speed back down when the system reboots. If everything is fine, run the entire 3DMark2001 benchmark a few times to see if the core can remain stressed for a longer period of time. Our test card went from a default core speed of 240MHz to 265MHz. At higher speeds it locked up during extended testing.

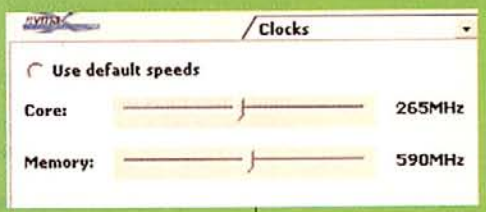




STEP #6

OVERCLOCKING THE MEMORY Memory generally overclocks much better than the core. Once again, move the slider up in 5MHz increments, load the *Dragothic* test, and look for problems. Memory clocked too high can freeze up the system, but before that happens you'll usually see white pixels pop up randomly on the screen, like a minor case of television static. If you see this, exit the benchmark immediately and move the slider back down 5MHz. Don't mistake the white dots that sometimes appear between the seams of textures for the "snow" that hot memory produces. As with the core, make sure to run the entire benchmark suite several times if the memory makes it through the *Dragothic* test. Our Ti 500 overclocked from 500MHz all the way to 590MHz. Anything beyond that caused snow or lockups.





STEP #7

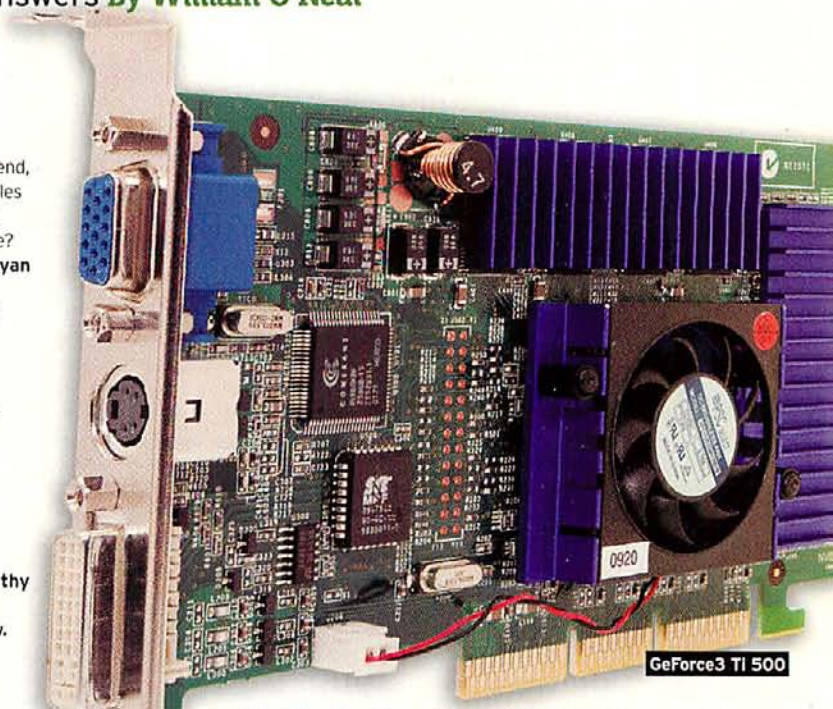
EXTENDED TESTING Once you've nailed down the stable core and memory speeds, turn them both up, disable Vsync, and run through the entire 3DMark2001 benchmark three or four times. If the card is still hanging in there, load up some games and start playing. Stick to first-person shooters and flight sims if possible, running at the highest resolution that still gives you decent frame rates, and play as many different games as you can for as long as you can. Sometimes an overclocked card will run 3DMark2001 flawlessly for days on end, only to choke on *Quake III* or *IL-2 Sturmovik*. If you see anything abnormal or the system crashes, you'll have to go back to the drawing board. Also, don't forget to enable Vsync when you're checking the visual quality of games. As long as you're running games at 75Hz to 85Hz, Vsync can only make things look better.

STEP #8

CHECKING 2D QUALITY If you are really worried about cooking your card, only overclock when you are about to play a particularly demanding game. Microsoft Word doesn't need an overclocked Ti 500 to run at peak efficiency (at least my version doesn't), so you might as well take things down to default levels if you spend a lot of time looking at a Windows desktop.

Tech Medics

You've got questions; we've got answers **By William O'Neal**



GeForce3 Ti 500

Which GeForce3 Ti 500 Should I Buy?

I'm buying a new video card. Which GeForce3 Ti 500 card do you recommend, the VisonTek Xtasy 6964 or the Hercules 3D Prophet III Titanium? Or better yet, which is the best Ti 500 card out there?

Bryan

I'm a fan of both of those flavors of the GeForce3 Ti 500. If I had to choose one over the other, though, then I'd say go with the VisionTek, as it's typically about $20 cheaper. Check out shopper.cnet.com or Pricewatch.com to see who has the lowest price.

Masters of the Obvious!

You rock.

Ernest and Cathy

Tell me something that I don't know. Erm...I mean thanks.

ASUS Makes a Bad Mother

You talked a little about the A7V266-E and the A7A266 in the January issue. I was wondering if you could tell me about the differences between them. I just purchased an Athlon XP 1900+ CPU, and everyone has referred me to the ASUS A7M266. Is that correct? Or are they dummies? Or are we all dummies? One more question for you: If you had the above (though you probably have better), how many gigabytes would you go with on the hard drive? I was thinking 100GB. And what about the hard drive controller?

Richard Hilovsky

For more thorough reviews of these motherboards, check out Extremetech .com. If, however, you want the short answer, then please read on. The A7V266-E uses the VIA KT266A chipset and boasts three DDR slots; the A7A266 uses the Ali M1647 chipset and boasts two DDR and three SDRAM slots; the A7M266 uses the AMD 761 chipset and has two DDR slots. People like the A7M266 because outfits like Falcon Northwest, VoodooPC, and Alienware use it. And we've never had any problems with it. I like the A7A266 because it takes either SDRAM or DDR memory. That said, if I were you, I'd build that Athlon XP 1900+ machine around an ASUS A7V266-E. Rock on!

Let Me Check...No

If you give me a free copy of Windows XP Home to go with my $350 GeForce3 Ti 500, I will bear your children, wash your car, and make you eggs every morning! I will even play *Candyland* and *Chutes and Ladders* with you! You can't refuse! By the way, I will cry in the corner and pee my pants if you say no.

Justin "Cloney" Hla-Gyaw

Am I the only one who wants to see this guy pee in his pants?

"So Let It Be Written, So Let It Be Done"

I'm building a machine and was wondering if I should go with a 2.2GHz Pentium 4 or an AMD Athlon XP 2000+.

Weathertrooper88

It all depends on your financial situation. If you happen to be a kept man and money is no object, then get a 2.2GHz Pentium 4 with a DDR-based motherboard: My tests have shown that it is faster than an Athlon XP 2000+. If, however, you're on a budget, then by all means get the Athlon XP 2000+.

Wil O'Neal's a Damn Liar!

Hey bud, you lied. In the "How to Build a System" section of the February issue, you stated: "I've based this how-to on the 2GHz Pentium 4 machine that is currently my Power Rig." However, you did not. You used the ASUS A7A266 motherboard, which is in no way Intel Pentium compatible. You also used an AMD Athlon Thunderbird instead of the Pentium 4. It doesn't really affect the "How to," but I thought that I would try to keep my favorite magazine honest.

Mark

You caught me. And for that little transgression I will surely be damned to the seventh level of hell. At least this next guy will be happy about that.

Help With a Reader Inquiry

I have here an envelope containing an invitation to resubscribe to your magazine. I would ordinarily have renewed my subscription, but I'm not going to this time for very obvious reasons. Your politics suck, and so do you. I don't care who [*sic*] you vote for. Since you insulted my intelligence, I'll be obnoxious in turn and tell you to stick it where the sun don't shine. With less than best regards,

Joe Castello

Where exactly does he want me to stick it?

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HAYDEN HOUSER

Killer Rigs

The best recipe for building your ultimate gaming machine **By William O'Neal**

As you no doubt know, Nvidia recently released the NV25 GPU, also known as the GeForce4 Ti 4600. As it has 128MB of DDR memory, I decided to use it in my Power Rig. Other than swapping the Klipsch Pro Media 4.1s that I was using for the Cambridge SoundWorks MegaWorks 510Ds, everything else is the same: 512MB Crucial PC2100 DDR RAM (two 256MB modules), an Antec SX-635 case, a 30GB IBM Deskstar 7200-rpm hard drive, 24/10/40 CD-RW drive, 16/40 DVD-ROM drive, SoundBlaster Audigy Gamer sound card, and Windows XP Home Edition.

When it came time to test this machine, it smoked. *Quake III: Arena* at 1600x1200x32 with everything, including full-texture detail, turned on ran at 131 frames per second and it scored 10127 on 3DMark2001 when run at 1024x768x32. Crucial recently released 512MB PC2100 DDR RAM modules, so next month I'll include one of those. I also expect to include a production GeForce4 Ti 4600 next month. And if you're wondering why I replaced the Klipschs with the Cambridges, you'll have to wait for Raphael Liberatore's review.

In case you're wondering why there's no Lean Machine, well, with so much top-notch stuff out there I couldn't bring myself to build a lesser rig. But don't fret, I'll soon put together a budget rig based on a GeForce4 MX graphics card.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARNOLD TOSEJO

By the Numbers

	Score
***Quake III: Arena* 1024x768x16**	208
***Quake III: Arena* 1024x768x32**	206
***Quake III: Arena* 1600x1200x32**	131
***Unreal Tournament* 1024x768x16**	64
***Expendable* 16-bit**	97
***Expendable* 32-bit**	95
***Re-Volt* 1024x768x16**	281
***Re-Volt* 1024x768x32**	282
***NFL Fever* 16-bit**	98
***Panzer Elite* 16-bit**	29
3D GameGauge 2.5	122
3DWinMark2000	299
3DMark2001 1024x768x32	10127

COMPONENT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE
CPU	2.2GHz Pentium 4	$562
Memory	512MB Crucial PC2100 DDR RAM	$150
Graphics Card	128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600	$400
Motherboard	Intel D845BG	$150
Case	Antec SX-635	$100
3.5" Floppy Drive	Teac	$20
Hard Drive	30GB IBM Deskstar 7200 rpm	$150
CD-RW Drive	Plextor 24/10/40	$175
DVD-ROM Drive	Pioneer DVD500-M 16/40 ATAPI	$75
Monitor	22" NEC MultiSync FE1250+ (black)	$700
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro	$40
Mouse	Wireless Intellimouse Explorer	$65
Sound Card	SoundBlaster Audigy Gamer	$100
Speakers	Cambridge SoundWorks MegaWorks 510D	$400
Joystick	Saitek Cyborg USB Gold Stick	$40
Gamepad	Microsoft SideWinder GamePad USB	$25
Operating System	Windows XP Home Edition	$200
TOTAL		**$3,352**

I decided to install the new GeForce4 Ti card in my Power Rig.

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Gamer's Edge

Winning for dummies Edited by Thierry Nguyen

OPERATION FLASHPOINT
PAGE 120

Win Medal of Honor!

Hey, want to land a copy of this World War II shooter? Send a Dirty Trick good enough to be printed! We want cheats for games like ***Return to Castle Wolfenstein,*** the ***War-Craft III*** beta, and so forth–any dirty, lowdown tricks for multiplayer games from the last six months. Good tricks get rewarded with great games like ***Medal of Honor,*** and the copies we have need a home. Write in and you could get to storm Normandy for free.



INSIDE



BLACK & WHITE: CREATURE ISLE
Prima and *CGW* take you through the trials of this expansion. **PAGE 110**



SID MEIER'S SIMGOLF
Keep golfers coming to your resort with this guide. **PAGE 115**



DAY OF DEFEAT 2.0
How to dominate online with class. **PAGE 117**



OPERATION FLASHPOINT
Witness great CTF tactics in this play-by-play. **PAGE 120**

PRIMA'S OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE

BLACK & WHITE™

CREATURE ISLE EXPANSION PACK

After the release of *Black & White*, Lionhead Studios listened carefully to players' comments. One recurring request was for greater ability to focus on the creature and give him more to learn and do. In response, Lionhead created *Creature Isle*.

As in *Black & White*, you can do whatever you like. You can be good or evil, create or destroy. But there's more to it than that. There's a reason you and your creature have been summoned here. That reason is the Brotherhood. These Brotherhood creatures are tougher, know more skills and miracles, and have more abilities. They wear bracelets to display their status, and if you're skilled enough, you can earn membership in this elite for your creature. Here are basic strategies and maps for the trials in *Creature Isle*.

Orrin's Racing Trial

Orrin is one cocky tortoise, and he's not the slowpoke you'd expect. In fact, to beat him at his race, you might have to employ some special tactics. Put simply, Orrin cheats. He uses the new Speed-Up miracle on himself whenever he feels like it. There are two solutions to this problem. If you have learned the Anti-Miracle miracle, cast it on Orrin to remove his extra speed. Or, if you have learned the Shrink miracle (which you get when you take over the Japanese village), you can shrink your creature and take a shortcut. The big stone gates are passable only if you're tiny, but they save you from running around a huge chunk of the track.



Taking the shortcut is the only way to be sure you beat the scaly competition.

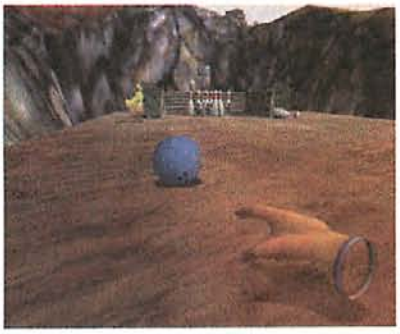
Madino's Bowling Trial

He's a cow, he's from Brooklyn, and he rocks at bowling. What can you do? Well, you can do quite a bit. The best thing is to let Tyke have his way. He tries to kick over your pins, helping you if your creature is losing.

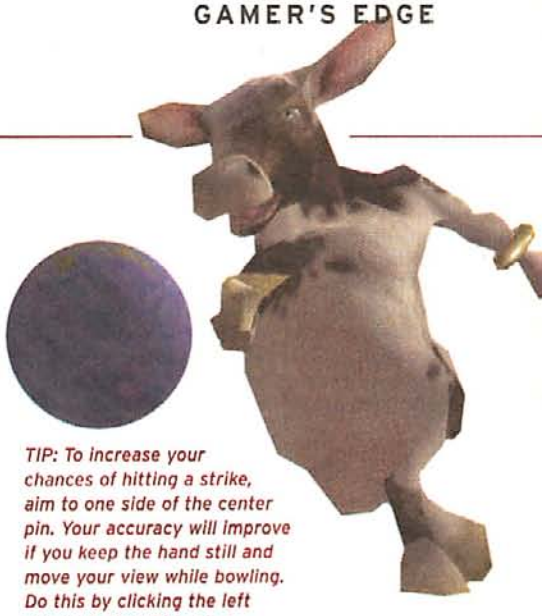
If you're bowling as a god in your own right rather than helping your creature, keep the ball's speed low and use "aftertouch," which alters the ball's trajectory after you've released it. After you've bowled, alter the spin on the ball by moving the mouse left or right to change the ball's direction.



Tyke may appear innocent, but he's plotting to help you here.



Aftertouch can be very useful when you're bowling.



TIP: To increase your chances of hitting a strike, aim to one side of the center pin. Your accuracy will improve if you keep the hand still and move your view while bowling. Do this by clicking the left mouse button (the move button) and holding it down while you move the mouse.

Rufus's Ring Trial



Rufus the Lion has a tricky trial, but you'd expect that as you are nearing the end. You must get all three rings from the bottom of the mountain to the top. The Ogres have irregularly timed patrols that are hard to figure out because they're actively hunting for you. You can get all three rings to the safe place without any help, but experiment with various miracles. By now your creature should know most, if not all, of the available miracles.

Casting Invisible on your creature will fail, but casting Speed-Up works, giving you an extra boost to get quickly past the pesky Ogres.

TIP: There's a back route that you can use to get up the mountain while avoiding the Ogres. Send your creature to the far right, along the coast, and he can reach the target area without encountering any Ogre hassles. Only one Ogre ever bothers patrolling here, and he comes through infrequently.

Arkle's Crops Trial



It is, as Arkle claims, a Trial of Patience. You must water the crops every day if you are going to please Arkle by having them grow to lush fullness. There is no timer, so take all the time you need. Choose early morning or sunset and give the fields a gentle soaking. Be warned: Overwatering the crops can do almost as much damage as letting them dry out. To get your creature into the spirit, use the Leash of Compassion when watering. If you can stand it, spreading some of your creature's waste products on the fields causes them to flourish even more.

EASTER EGG: As you work, an interlude runs between the field's security guard and Romeo, his best friend. Romeo wants to be alone with Juliet, but her father is trying to prevent this. Tap on their house to get Juliet and dad to come out. Remove various people to see all the possible outcomes.

Guddle's Herding Trial



Neat, semicircular movements are the best way to herd the sheep.

You must herd the sheep together and head them toward the pen by the coast. Guddle's sheep start in a neat flock near the pen. The sheep tend to flock together over time—leave them alone and eventually they'll meet in one area. Keep your creature as far from them as possible, so that only the ones at the back get spooked. Keep them as calm as possible as you move your creature in a large semicircle behind the flock to usher it along. Watch out for the wolf. If you see him, move your creature in to prevent him from stealing a sheep or two.

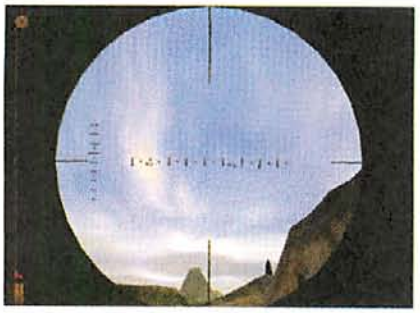
TIP: To avoid tearing your fur out in frustration or coming to fisticuffs with your computer, be sure to drop Tyke off at the Creature Minder's for this trial. If you don't take this step, the little guy will most definitely get in the way and wreck all of your attempts at herding the sheep.

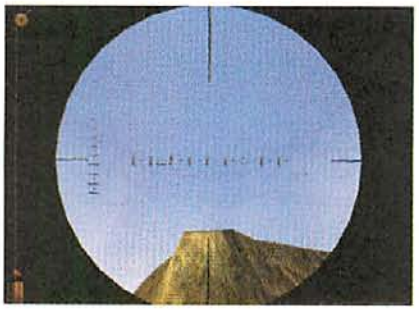
Flitter's Ballista Trial

You want surreal? It doesn't get any more surreal than a zebra with a ballista firing a man with a mule's head at some herbs. The man will only be cured of his mule-head affliction if he gathers three herbs from difficult-to-reach points on the landscape. You have to fire him up to these places using the catapult-like ballista. There's a lot of trial and error involved in aiming. Two of the herbs can be reached more easily when the ballista is on full power, but the third (behind the hill) needs about half-power.



Remember, objects in the ballista's sights are closer than they appear.







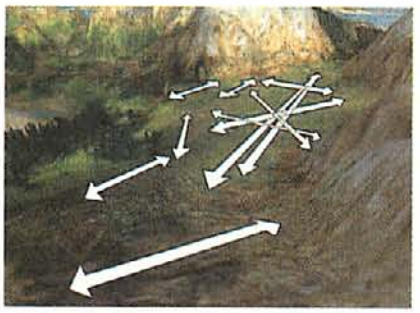
Adjust your view in order to match these figures and find all three herbs.

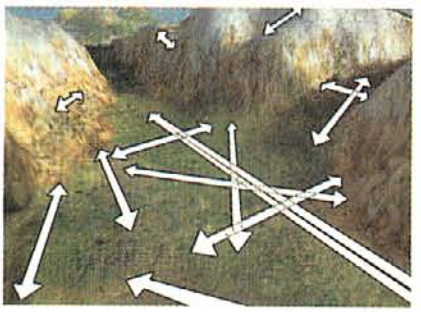
Pashar's Shooting Trial

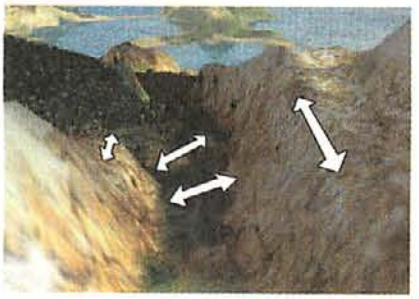
The Marauders always come from the same start points and move in fixed patterns. Let them get close to guarantee a hit rather than waste time blasting from a distance. If you miss them the first time, they simply continue moving along their paths and eventually will get close to you again. Set the power to full and aim using the elevation. The elevation is the easiest control to master, so since you know where the Marauders are, you don't have to master the power—just use max on every shot.



Keep rotating the view so you don't miss any of the Marauders.



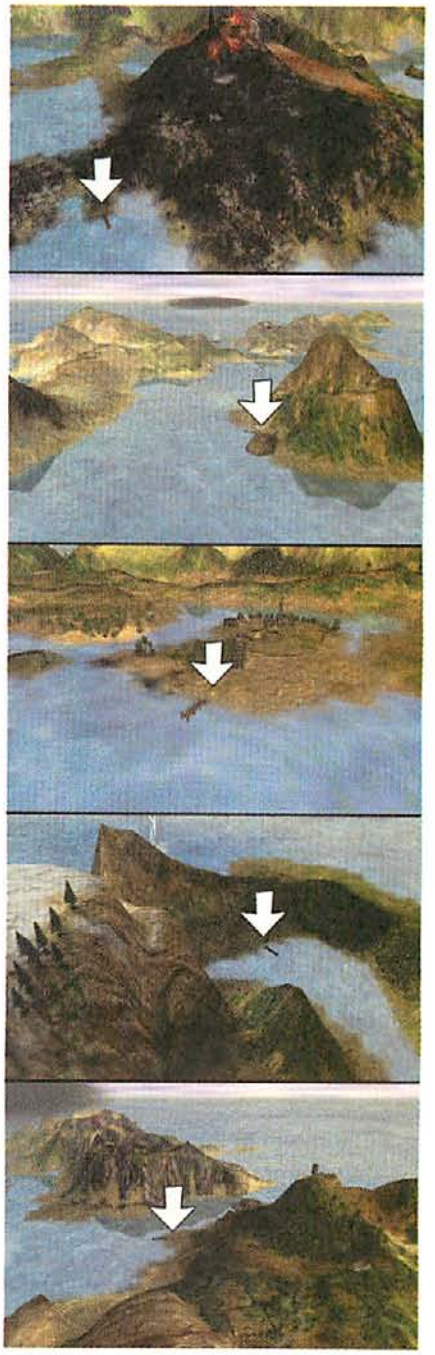




The Marauders patrol in back-and-forth motions, which are mapped out here.

Kula's Missionary Trial

Note the position of the stranded Missionaries and collect them all using the rebuilt boat they arrived on. Use the Good Advisor Spirit, who blows the boat around in the direction you choose, depending on your cursor position. Move the Advisor in small arcs behind the boat to keep it heading in the right direction. Don't let it move too fast, or it'll go out of control. Use a steady movement to keep the boat on track. Don't let the hurricane winds blow your boat onto the nearest shore.



These are the locations where you'll find all of the Missionaries.

Lukely's Protection Trial

The four giant humans are heading toward the rocks between them and the Wonder structure. When they get to the rocks, they'll hurl them at the Wonder. Your creature has to stop this act of desecration. The giants are frightened of your creature, and when he approaches them, they back off. Click on a rock that has a giant near it to make your creature move toward it, thus sending the giant back. This trial requires constant attention. The most efficient method is to click on the rock on the right first, and go through the others in sequence, sweeping in an arc. This way your creature spends more time actually scaring the giants and less time moving into position. In order to win this trial, you must send the giants back to their fires.



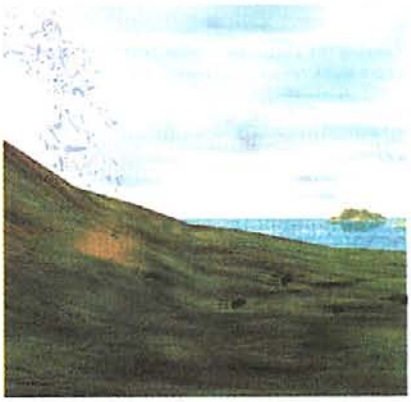
Don't let the giants creep up on you.

Fang's Hide & Seek Trial

Fang the Wolf is a master of cunning. Okay, so he's invisible. All is not lost. There's one way to find him every time: Watch his tracks and listen for his occasional howls.

When you locate the dastardly devil, cast the Anti-Miracle miracle on him—it annoys him, and he accuses you of cheating (and then he simply makes himself invisible again). Don't worry, though, you being called a cheater won't get back to Eve.

To stay close to Fang, locate his tracks and follow the prints he makes on the ground. Keep your distance to avoid startling him. Be warned: If you follow too far behind, the tracks will vanish. You'll be back to square one and start it all over again.



Follow Fang's howl and tracks when he's invisible.

Jango's Marbles Trial

Marbles is the sport of gods. Get your creature to throw his own marbles into the higher scoring zones while keeping Jango from doing the same. The highest scoring zone is in the center, and the zones decrease in value the farther out they are. The center zone is worth 150 points; outer zones are worth 70, 30, and 10 points.

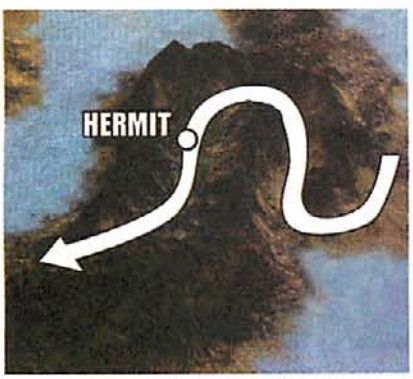
To beat Jango, throw your marbles past the center of the arena to the edge of the zone nearer him. The idea is to form a wall of marbles, which increases the likelihood of Jango knocking your marbles into higher scoring positions as he throws toward the middle. At the very least, your marble wall acts as a barrier he has to get through.



Marbles keep moving after they land on a target.

Nazzle's Rescue Trial

To rescue Nazzle, you must get past the Hermit (who can't see you but can hear you) and his dogs (who can see and smell you). Make your move at night. If your creature casts an Invisibility miracle on himself, the dogs won't be able to see him. When the Hermit is sleeping, you can get very close to him, but if he starts to wake up, freeze. To deal with the dogs, simply stay as far away from them as possible because they can still smell you. The dogs move around at night, so be sure to time your moves to get past them. You'll find Nazzle at the top of the track. He'll automatically be freed after your creature arrives.



Take your time and follow this path to the Bear.

Monty's Smashing Trial

The first to wreck five buildings wins this trial. Use the Leash of Aggression and click on the building you want to mash. When the building stops sparkling, it has been destroyed. Throwing rocks is more efficient, so when your creature is on the Leash of Aggression, click on a rock and then on a building to get him to hurl the rock at it. When he's got a destructive rage on, he may use his hands as well. The last building is the Japanese-style temple on top of the hill. Although there is a path to the temple, it's far faster to get your creature to fling rocks at it. He could also use aggressive miracles, if he has any—Lightning and Fireball are both effective.



A raging gorilla is quite a sight.

Lukely's Building Trial

First you must complete the Protection trial. It's not very challenging, but it teaches your creature an important skill. Leash your creature to the big building nearby using the Leash of Learning. He'll soon pick up on how to build things.

Monty the Gorilla interferes, but you don't need to do anything about this. He's actually being helpful by smashing the Wonder so you'll be able to learn how to build.

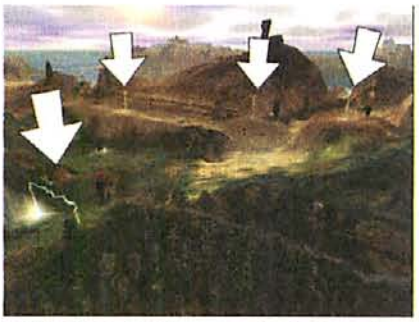
Once your creature has learned to build, he is invaluable around town. Note that creatures don't need scaffolds to build. They can construct whatever the town needs next or repair existing buildings.



TIP: Encourage Tyke to stay close to your creature as he learns to build so that Tyke also picks up this skill and uses it at your settlements. This is vital; otherwise, you'll have to teach him to build, which is time consuming and might not be as successful.

Yax's Soccer Trial

Your creature controls the ball by being on the opposite side of where you want it to go. You must send it into the four marked areas, past Yax the Mandrill's chums. The trick is to keep the ball close to your feet as you go for the areas. Kick it a small way using the action button, immediately chase it, and get into position for the next kick. Wait until the ball has stopped rolling before making your creature kick it; otherwise, he may kick it in the wrong direction. You win when you've finished this and kicked the ball into the goal.



Getting the ball to these areas is the highest priority in Yax's Soccer Trial.

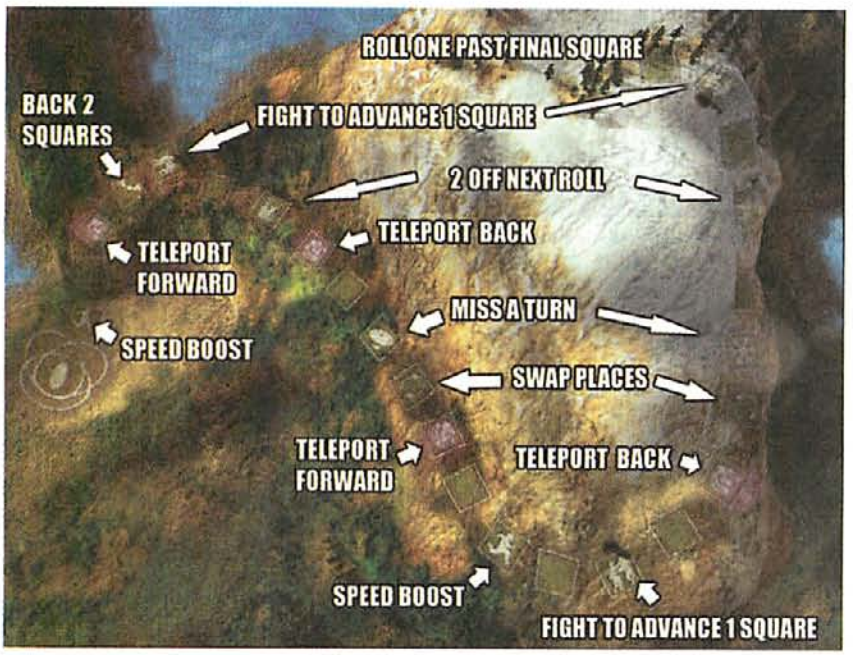


Keeping the soccer ball under control means short kicks rather than massive punts.



Use the contours of the land to help with your aiming.

Pristax's Board Game Trial



At first, it appears that this is a game of sheer trial and error. You roll the dice and the creature moves.

But there is a way to alter the outcome. If you use the mouse carefully, you can actually roll the numbers you want! If you throw the dice slowly, you can ensure it turns only a little, so the side facing you as you start to throw will end facing upward.

To win this trial, start by rolling a 3. This places you on a square that teleports you farther. While the Ogre takes his turn (which is randomly generated), explore the board and see which square would benefit you most. This often depends on where the Ogre has landed, so keep an eye on where he is as well as where you'd like to go.

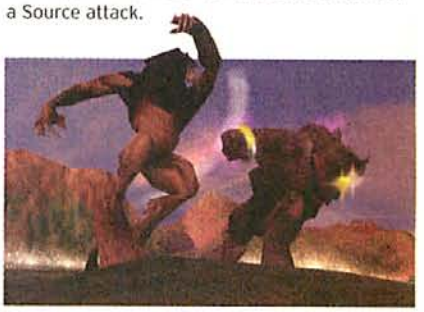
TIP: Rolling higher numbers isn't always the best policy. Sometimes a 1 benefits you much more than a 6.



Throw the dice carefully to "select" the number you want.

Naxo's Fight Trial

Naxo is one mean rhinoceros. He fights with the power of the Source, which enables him to control objects nearby and hurl them at you using his mind. To defeat him, you must know the Heal miracle prior to combat and use it a lot. Stay close to Naxo to reduce the chance of a Source attack.



Mercurio's Battle

Mercurio the Crocodile is the king of Creature Isle. He's also Eve's guardian, and to get close to her, you have to beat him in combat. Not only is he quick and powerful, but he uses the same powers as Naxo the Rhino. He feels the Source, and if you allow him to create a physical gap between you and him, he'll blast you with it. There's no easy way to defeat Mercurio. Get your creature in close to avoid Source attacks and use Heal often.



To play as Mercurio, you must first beat him—and he's quite an opponent.

Sid Meier's SimGolf

Keep those golfers coming to your resort with this handy guide By Rob Smolka

If you're taking the time to read this strategy guide, you're probably already well aware of how great a game *SimGolf* is. One of the best things about it is that even if you don't have the perfect strategy, you can have a ball just building your courses and resorts in Sandbox mode. When you step up to the challenge of having to deal with a budget, however, things can get a little hairy, and that's where these tips for running your resort will come in handy.

Slow and Steady Don't go nuts and try to build the entire course right away. Remember: If you're not turning a profit by the time you reach the end of year two, it's game over, buddy. It's going to take a while to attract enough visitors to make your holes profitable, so don't build more than two or three holes during the first two years you're in business. **(Figure 1)**

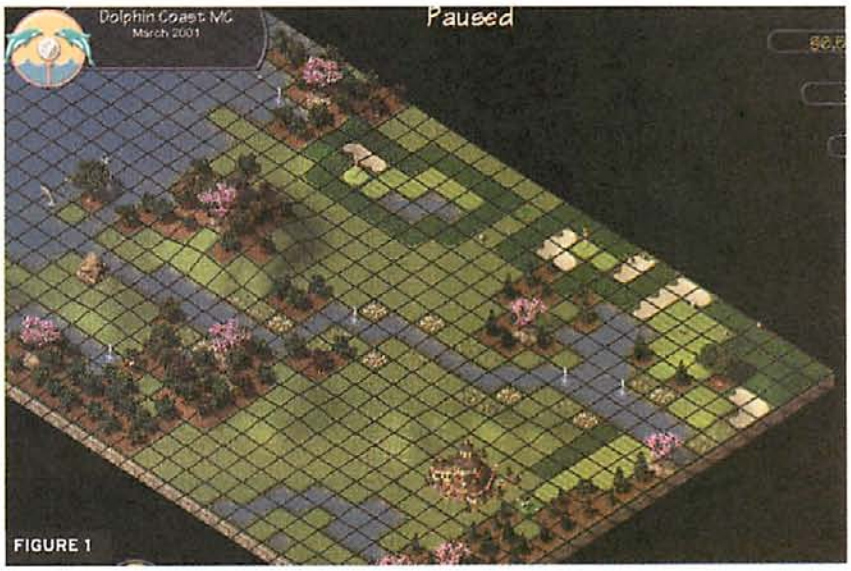


FIGURE 1

Eliminate Redundancies At first, when money is tight, you may want to hold off on hiring help. Eventually, though, a full staff will be needed to keep your resort running properly. When hiring marshalls, try to place them so that their spheres of access cover more than one hole at a time. The same goes for refreshment providers. Groundskeepers and turf technicians should be placed carefully so as not to overlap their zones. It would be nice to just hire one technician per hole, but for longer par fours and par fives, one probably won't cover all the way from the tee to the green. The most efficient system is to set up a few technicians so that they cover the most ground without overlapping. Then, as you build your course, make sure that you stay within the confines of the workers' zones. Dandelions grow very quickly and are a total eyesore, so you'll want to get rid of them as soon as they pop up. **(Figure 2)**

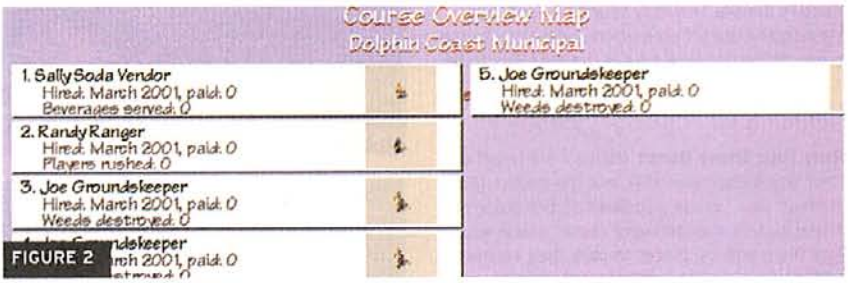


FIGURE 2

Show Me the Way An efficient golf course is a profitable golf course. If the golfers can't find their way between holes, they're going to do a lot of wandering around, wasting valuable time and avoiding paying the greens fees. Your first hole should be fairly close to the clubhouse, and there should always be a path leading to it. From there, it's important that you continue laying the path to each hole, and that the path always be connected to the clubhouse. **(Figure 3)**


FIGURE 3

Food and Drink More so than normal people, the golfers that come to your resort have an insatiable appetite, so make sure they don't up and leave because they can't quell those hunger pangs. Building a snack bar will be just the thing to keep them playing and paying. In order for the snack bar to operate, you must have a path connecting it with the clubhouse. As your course grows, you're going to want to add more snack bars so the golfers have easy access to one whenever their hunger hits. Building one for every four holes or so should cover the bases. **(Figure 4)**

Stay Connected Like the snack bar, all of the other facilities that you build must have a path that connects them to the clubhouse or they will fail to operate. This path doesn't have to be direct—as long as you properly connect each hole using a cart path, you should have no problem placing a facility next to the existing path or running a small auxiliary path off the main one to get to the facility. The one


FIGURE 4

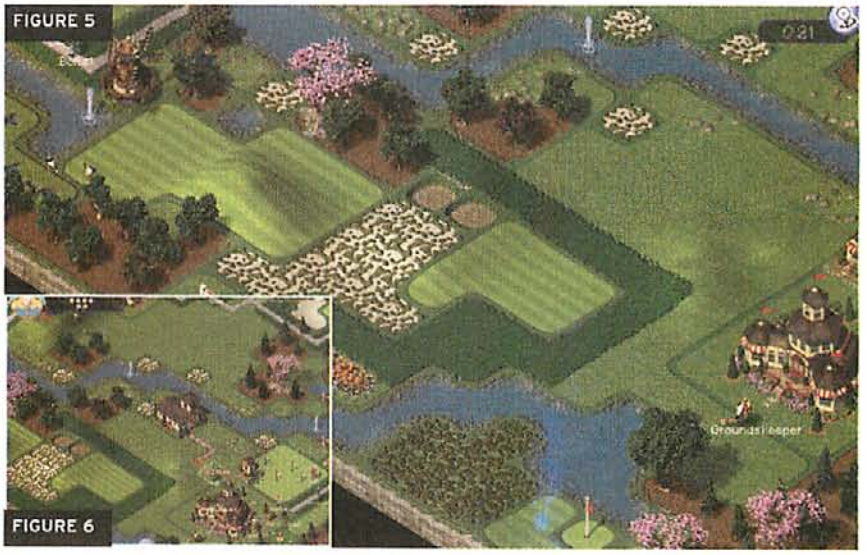

FIGURE 5

FIGURE 6

exception is that home sites need not be connected in order for Silver and Gold members and celebrities to be able to move into them. **(Figures 5 and 6)**

Keep It Simple This may sound obvious, but keeping the tee-off area of one hole close to the green of the previous hole is the best way to go. If golfers have too far to travel to the next hole, they may decide to call it a day. **(Figure 7)**

Rest Your Weary Bones Maybe it's a result of their snack-bar-heavy diet, but the golfers that come to your course also seem to tire quickly. These loafers abandon your resort unless you give them enough places to park their keisters and regain energy. In other words, make sure you have many benches spread around the course! **(Figure 8)**

Tame the Terrain Hills, undulations, and slopes are key ingredients when it comes to building your course, but they're anathema to golfers trying to get from one hole to the other. Try to avoid running paths up or down hills. If you can't go around them, you might want to flatten the terrain with the elevation tool. **(Figure 9)**

Shiny Baubles Making an attractive golf course is always a high priority, but puttin' on the Ritz is even more important when it comes to more difficult holes. Golfers may *say* they like a good challenge, but when they hit their ball into that deviously placed pot bunker, they sing a different tune. Putting scenic items in view will help soothe their nerves and prompt them to keep playing, despite their frustrations. **(Figure 10)**

Speed It Up Slow play costs greens fees, pure and simple. One of the best ways to speed up the hackers on your course is to let them drive around in golf carts. It's certainly not cheap, but as soon as you are allowed (and can afford it), build a golf cart garage. Your bottom line will thank you for it. **(Figure 11)**


FIGURE 7



FIGURE 8

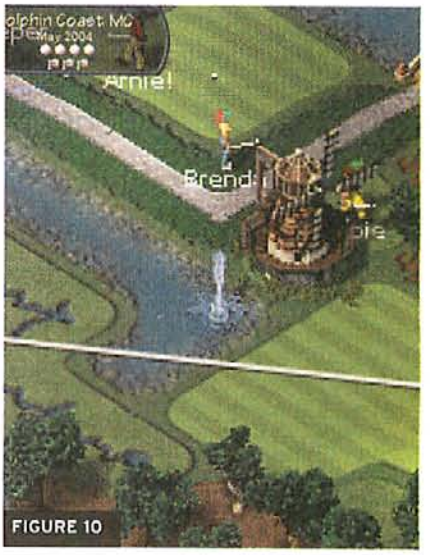


FIGURE 10

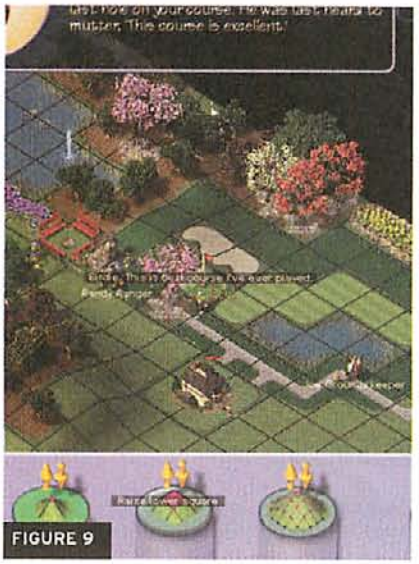

FIGURE 9



FIGURE 11



When defending the Dog 1 beach as an Axis machine gunner, deploying the machine gun to provide maximum coverage is important. If you are positioned in the far left sandbags, point the gun at the obstacle shown in the picture (a Czech Hedgehog) as a reference point before dropping the bipod. You'll get nice coverage across the entire width and length of the beach.

Day of Defeat 2.0

How to dominate online with class

By T. Byrl Baker

The latest version of our pick for multiplayer mod of the year has undergone so many changes that it's practically a new game. A new sprint key makes it much easier to dash for cover, spawn camping is gone (I dare you to go into a spawn area), accuracy has been cranked up a notch with the addition of a new recoil system, and the new levels are both beautiful and enormous. Any FPS fan with a copy of *Half-Life* needs to give *Day of Defeat 2.0* a shot, as it's the best representation of World War II combat yet packed into a game. Unfortunately, *DoD 2.0* is pretty harsh for newbies, so we've thrown together this short class guide to get you pointed in the right direction.

Allied Rifleman (Light Infantry)

What used to be arguably the best all-around class has undergone some subtle changes that make it a little less powerful than it was in version 1.3. The rate of fire for the semi-automatic Garand has been slightly reduced, and although it still shoots much faster than its bolt-action Axis counterpart, Allied light infantry will have a much tougher time mowing down entire squads of infantry in quick succession.

The Garand used to be one of the best firearms in the game for run-and-gun shooting, but that has all changed now that the gun sways when you move. You have to keep still if you want to shoot with any degree of accuracy, and your aim will improve dramatically if you are crouched or prone. Tactics for light infantry this time around are much less aggressive than they were in version 1.3, so get used to sprinting for cover, shooting from behind it, and sprinting for cover again.

The Garand's eight-round clip still must be emptied before a new clip can be loaded, so watch your ammo. If you are down to four rounds or fewer and think you have a few seconds to spare, shoot the remaining rounds into a nearby wall or the ground and load a fresh clip post-haste. This gun doesn't have the stopping power of the German light infantry rifle, so it always pays to have as many rounds available as possible before engaging the enemy.

Allied Sergeant

The Sarge is two classes in one now that you can choose between his bread-and-butter Thompson machine gun and the new semi-automatic M1 Carbine. Both loadouts are the best choices for novice Allied players to cut their teeth on, as their relatively large magazine capacities and good accuracy are forgiving for those with poor fire discipline. Of the two weapons, the Carbine is easier to aim and keep under control while firing, so stick with that until you've built up enough skill to handle the beefier artillery.

The new Carbine is like a toned-down version of version 1.3's light infantry Garand. Its laughably low recoil gives it superb accuracy at short and medium ranges, even when on the move, but it's cursed with very little stopping power. It's like a long-range pistol, and unless you score a couple of head or chest shots, it can take five or more hits to put an enemy down for good. On the plus side, it shoots as fast as you can press the trigger, and the minimal kick makes it easy to keep the crosshair on an enemy while unloading half a clip into their body. Just point and shoot (and shoot and shoot).

Allied Support Infantry

The new recoil system has a significant impact



Firing a machine gun on the move is recommended only as a last-ditch effort to save yourself or if you are fighting in close quarters. As you see from the puffs on the wall, the bullet pattern isn't exactly tight.



You'll need bangalore torpedoes (pictured here) to blast a hole in the fence (also called the shingle) when fighting for the Allies on beach assault missions. If you see a torpedo, pick it up and sprint down the fence line until an explosives icon shows up. Sooner or later it'll blow a gap in the fence that will let you and your comrades get on with the rest of the mission objectives.

on the infantry support soldier's abilities. That big Browning automatic kicks like a mule, and it takes a practiced touch in order to keep the barrel steady when the action heats up. Combine that drawback with the gun's skimpy 20-round clips, and you have a combination best left to the experts.

When you're playing this class, pretend you have a semiautomatic rifle and tap the mouse button instead of holding it down. Burst fire keeps barrel rise to a minimum and doesn't waste ammo. Stay behind the assault troops while laying down covering fire, and go prone whenever you can to increase your accuracy. Just one or two bullets from this soldier's fearsome gun can put down an enemy for good. The infantry support soldier has plenty of clips, so don't be afraid to shoot into any dark corners or other gloomy places where you think the enemy may be hiding.

Axis Grenadier (Light Infantry)

An increased rate of fire has finally turned the German light infantry class into a good match for its Allied counterpart at all but short range. The bolt-action Karabiner 98k is still basically a sniper rifle sans scope, devastatingly accurate even when you are standing up. It also seems to be more stable than most other weapons when you're moving. The rifle's only real drawback now is its skimpy five-round magazine, so don't forget to slam in a full clip any time there is a lull in the action.

This is the only class that comes equipped with four grenades, so don't be afraid to use them. A good tactic is to throw a grenade into a spot where you think the enemy is hiding and then quickly switch to your rifle so you can shoot them as they flee. If you manage to sneak

GENERAL TIPS

Ammo With a few exceptions, don't worry about running out of ammo. Reload any time there is a break in the action, even if you have a half-full clip. Any clips or grenades you have left by the time you get capped is ammo that could have been spent laying down covering fire, flushing out campers, or topping off your gun. The machine gunners are the exceptions to this tip, as ammo conservation is a very important aspect of their class.

One other word on ammo: All the automatic weapons in the game use tracer bullets that create a nice, straight line leading directly back to your position. Smart players always use this telltale sign to determine your elevation and the direction you're facing, which is one more reason to fire in short bursts instead of a steady stream.

Grenades Just like the previous version, this version of *DoD* lets you scoop up grenades and throw them back in an enemy's face by looking at them and pressing the Use key (mapped to E by default). All grenades are on a long five-second fuse, so don't be surprised to see a well-tossed ball of death come flying back at you. To avoid this, use a technique called priming. Drop a grenade on the ground next to you, pick it back up, and fling it. If your timing and aim are good, you'll get a devastating air burst, and at the very least you can be sure that any enemy who tries to play hot potato with your 'nade will go home minus a few limbs.



If you're directly beneath a second- or third-story window and need to lob a grenade in there, it's easy to line up the throw when playing as an Axis soldier. Line up the intersection of the wood handle and metal portion of the grenade with the bottom of the window, and heave it.



Allied grenades are trickier to aim than Axis potato mashers, but there's a simple trick to use if you are right under a second- or third-story window. Center the window in your viewpoint, line up the top of your virtual hand's middle finger with the bottom of the window, and toss it on in.

If someone on your team throws a grenade and it lands where it isn't going to do any good (i.e., right next to you), pick that sucker up and help it along. You can give it more distance if you throw while running, and more height if you throw while jumping. This time around, the crosshair disappears when grenades are selected, so aiming takes a lot of practice.



One sneaky new element to be aware of in the Ramelle map is the inclusion of stained glass windows that can be shot through without breaking. A building with nine such windows (shown here) is located directly opposite the Allied spawn area, so look sharp and lay some fire into each window if you see teammates getting killed for seemingly no reason.



There's a radio sitting on a table near one of the Axis spawn points in the Dog 1 map. Pick it up and run it across the map to the far right bunker (the concrete structure sitting behind the sandbags in this picture) to make mortar fire on the beach more accurate.

behind an enemy and get close enough, use the secondary fire button to bayonet him in the back so you don't have to waste precious time reloading in order to deal with any of his buddies that come running when they hear the scream.

Axis Unteroffizier

Faster and more accurate than the Scharführer, the Unteroffizier is the Axis unit of choice for beginning players. His MP40 machine pistol is nowhere near as precise as it was in version 1.3b, but the gun has relatively little recoil compared to other automatic weapons to make up for its moderate stopping power. There's not much else to say about this class; because it's so well-rounded, it has no glaring weaknesses or advantages.

Axis Scharführer

Unlike the Allied infantry support unit, the Scharführer makes a superb assault soldier. This is the guy you want to have when you pop around a corner at the far side of the map and see six enemy soldiers staring back at you. His MP44 is moderately powerful, has a generous 30-round clip, and is fairly accurate up to medium ranges as long as you don't panic and hold down the trigger. Even if you do slip up and unload an entire clip at once, this gun has much less recoil than its Allied equivalent (the BAR), requiring much less mouse control to keep the barrel from rising. The Scharführer is a solid choice for players of all skill levels, and judicious use of the sprint key makes up for his slow walking speed.

Snipers

The Axis Scharfschuetze has traded his overpowered semiautomatic Gewehr 43 for a slow bolt-action Karabiner 98k with a scope, making him equal to the Allied sniper in nearly every regard. Sniping is much harder in version 2.0 than it was in 1.3–especially for the Axis–so leave this class to the experts if you're just getting started.

The sniper's worst enemy is not another sniper, but a knife (or shovel) in the back. Never stay in one spot too long, no matter how long it took to get there or how safe it seems. Use your ears as much as your eyes–crank your speakers up and listen for telltale signs of someone approaching from behind your position. In general, the best sniper hides are the ones that are accessible only via a ladder, as the ladder always makes noise when someone is scaling it.

Machine Gunners

The new machine gunner classes are a blast to play, literally, but all that firepower had to be balanced out with a lot of restrictions. Firing on the move is an utter waste of ammo, as recoil reduces accuracy to nil. Laserlike accuracy can be had when the bipod is deployed, but it comes at the expense of mobility. The gun can only traverse so much to the right and left when deployed, making machine gunners more susceptible to flank attacks than any other unit. Try to find positions that give you long-range alleys of fire, with walls on both sides protecting your flanks. Better yet, see if you can get a sniper or light infantry soldier to work alongside you and take care of unseen threats.

It's possible to cover two intersecting roads as long as you are careful where you deploy the bipod. If you deploy while the gun is pointing down one road, it won't traverse enough to cover the other road. Go prone in a corner if possible, point the gun right down the line where the two roads meet, and you'll be able to turn enough to the left and right to cover both approaches. If you mess up, just hit the right mouse button to stow the bipod and quickly redeploy once you are pointed the right way.



Use spectator mode to find hidden areas on the map. The church steeple shown here can be accessed, but look around for the ladder when you're not being shot at.

Keep an eye out above and below your position for potential threats as well. The gun only points up and down a little bit when deployed, and the vertical arc of fire is determined by where the barrel is pointed when the bipod is extended. If you are in a low or ground-level position, point the barrel up before deploying the bipod so you can spray fire into high windows. Similarly, if you are on the top floor of a building, point the barrel down slightly before deploying. Getting a feel for quickly stabilizing the machine gun to give it the most coverage possible takes practice, but that stability separates the men from the boys when wielding these mighty weapons.

The Allied .30 Caliber and Axis MG42 both come with a few large cans of ammo, while the Axis MG34 comes with several drums that each hold smaller capacities (which means you should be prepared to reload more often). The MG42 has an incredibly high rate of fire and is the only machine gun that has a heat meter on the HUD. Fire in bursts, or suffer the consequences of being left with a gun full of ammo that refuses to shoot for several seconds until the barrel cools.

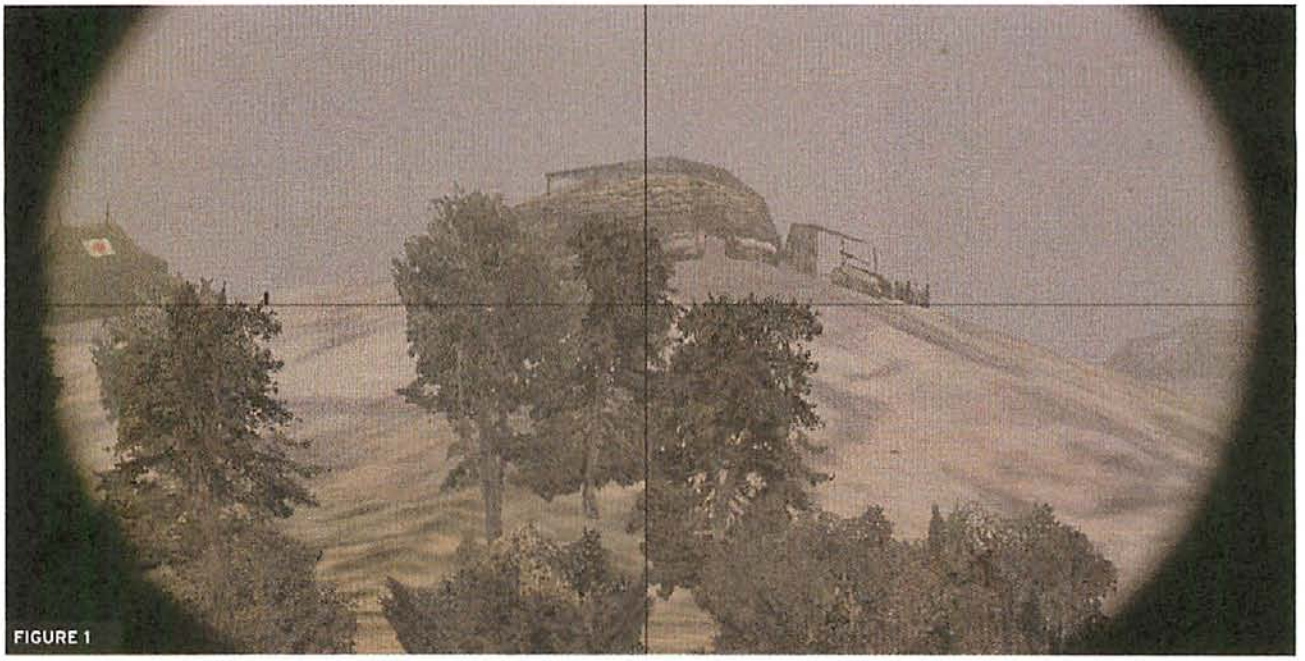


FIGURE 1

Operation Flashpoint

Witness great CTF tactics in this play-by-play

By Tom Chick and Bruce Geryk

Not only did the single-player mode net this game *CGW*'s Game of the Year award last issue, but its multiplayer combines the best of its single-player and multiplayer elements into a tense squad-versus-squad throwdown. Tom Chick and Bruce Geryk, playing on Mox's popular MIT -CTF-5C scenario (available for download from www.planetrainbowsix.com/atwar), went for a best two-out-of-three bout.

The scenario takes place east of Malden on a tiny island split into two sides, with the U.S. on the east and the Soviets on the west. The bases are separated by three hills that run from north to south (Hills 36, 48, and 52). On top of each hill are bunkers and ammo crates **(Figure 1)**. A single road connects the bases, passing along the north slope of Hill 48.

Each side's base is situated in a safe zone, which members of the opposite team cannot enter. Killed troops respawn at their base. Just forward of each side's safe zone is its flag, surrounded by antivehicle mines and barricades **(Figure 2)**. The AI can't navigate the barricades very well, so a gentlemen's agreement of having only human players score flag captures is set. The rounds have a two-hour time limit and 10-point score limit. Frags score 1 point each, and a flag capture nets 10 points. Each team is composed of a squad of five men. By the flip of a coin, it was determined that Bruce would be the Soviets.

All weapons can be used, but to prevent the competition from devolving into car chases and tank battles, vehicles can be used only to get from the base to the edge of the safe zone **(Figure 3)**. Vehicles aren't allowed outside the safe zones, and the weapons mounted on the vehicles are off-limits. Learn from these two commanders as they demonstrate what to do and what not to do.

Round 1

Tom, 12:30: There's a nice hidden beach that wraps along the island's southern coast, out of view of the hilltops, leading right up to the Soviet flag. As long as Bruce isn't making a beeline for my flag, I think I can keep him occupied with an aggressive surprise attack. In order to reload my squad's guns without having to run all the way back to the base or worry about being cut off from an ammo crate, I load my men into an ammo truck and head to the edge of my safe zone at the beach. From there, I'll run up to Hill 52 while sending my squad west along the beach, holding them just short of his flag while I scout from the hill.

Bruce, 12:30: I'm taking all of my guys to my flag. Tom will probably dash to Hill 48 or 52, both of which dominate the map. If I go there, we'll surely engage in combat. Since I've never played *Flashpoint* against Tom, I'd rather hang back and see what he comes up with.

Bruce, 12:35: While I scout from Hill 36, I've manually positioned my men around the flag and put them in Stealth combat mode. The default scenario condition for the squad is Hold Fire, indicated by the red square above each soldier's picture. When they see an enemy soldier, they'll call out a contact, at which point I'll release them to fire (keystrokes: '31). The key to playing *Flashpoint* as a tactical game is using the squad commands as a quick keystroke sequence. For instance, setting everyone's combat mode to Danger ('72) means they'll go prone. If they're caught in the open, telling them to take cover ('18) means they'll head for the nearest trees. Telling them to return to formation ('11) orders them to follow you.

Tom, 12:44: From Hill 52, it looks like Bruce isn't at his flag **(Figure 4)**. It's possible he's running for mine. I send my men the rest of the way along the beach and run down the hill to grab his flag.

Bruce, 12:45: CONTACT. I tap out '31 and the firing starts. I can't see what's going on from Hill 36, so he must be attacking from the south. I think I ambushed him.

Tom, 12:47: "Oh no, 4 is down!" comes over the radio as I'm heading downhill. As I stop to whip out my binoculars, 2 goes down. I panic, order my men to take cover, and run back up to the hilltop fort. With my binoculars, I see my last two guys go down as they run away. I didn't even get a chance to give the order to return fire. But now I see that Bruce's guys are in the trees at the bottom of the hill overlooking his flag. Sneaky bastards. I've got their number now. Before I order my respawned guys up from the base, I use the Action option on the menu to equip 4 and 5 with M21 sniper rifles

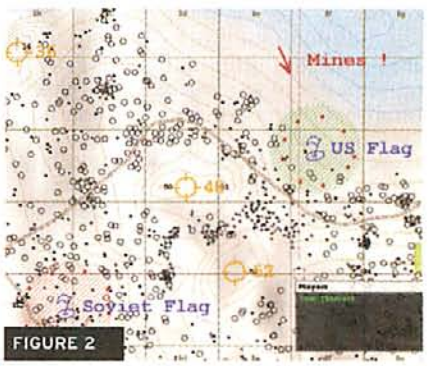


FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3


FIGURE 4


FIGURE 5

and load up 2 and 3 with M60 machine guns.

Bruce, 12:50: I nailed all four of his troopers with no losses. I should reposition my defense because Tom knows where I am, but since it worked so well the first time...

Tom, 1:03: I've been watching to make sure there's no movement. As far as I can tell, Bruce left his guys in the same place. I put my snipers on the slopes of Hills 48 and 52, overlooking his flag. My machine gunners then follow me as I creep down to a firing position from some trees. I give the snipers the command to open fire. After they get off a few shots, I have the machine gunners attack from another direction. In no time at all, he's taken four losses (where is Bruce himself?) and I make a beeline for his flag. I've lost one machine gunner, but I leave everyone else in position to cover my retreat.

Bruce, 1:05: Suddenly I'm getting casualty reports, but I have no idea where Tom is attacking. Then my flag is captured while I'm still waiting for my guys to arrive from base. I should have taken Hills 48 and 52 while Tom's troopers respawned. Always press a 5-to-1 numerical advantage.

Tom, 1:10: Made it back with no opposition. Final score: 14 to 6.

Round 2

Tom, 12:30: This time I'll do what Bruce did and set up defenses first. If he wants to play the waiting game, then we'll play. Unfortunately, my flag is out in the open, so I'll situate my men in the woods about 200 meters to the southwest. I'll lurk at the base of Hill 48 and see if I can spot him moving in. I head out in the ammo truck to park it at the road on the edge of my safe zone for convenient resupply.

Bruce, 12:30: Tom seems eager to come to me, so once again I'm going to play it safe—head for my flag zone and see what happens.

Bruce, 12:50: Where is he? Time to send out a scouting party. The longer your enemy goes undetected, the more time that he has to gain a favorable position.

Tom, 12:50: Note to self: Next time I go into combat, bring a book.

Tom, 1:10: Peek-a-boo. I see Bruce skulking around the hill above me **(Figure 5)**. I'm going to sit tight and see what he's doing. Bring it on, you Commie scum.

Bruce, 1:10: I'm on top of Hill 48, and he's not here or on Hill 52. I can see at least two soldiers camped at his flag, with a truck parked just behind. I'm sure he's left the hills open for me to take them, so I'll avoid them and circle around the way he came the first time. Then I can hit him from the wooded area to the south of his flag.

Bruce, 1:25: CONTACT. Fast and furious action in the trees.

Tom, 1:25: Whoa, who's firing? I didn't give the orders to open fire, so Bruce's guys must have seen me and started shooting. I quickly tell my guys to open fire, then I set combat mode to Danger and give them orders to take cover. How did he get around me?

Bruce, 1:30: I think I opened fire too soon, since the range is long and I'm not hitting much. I took out one of his guys, but lost two of mine. My machine gunner's PK is out of ammo **(Figure 6)**. Lesson learned: If you haven't been spotted and you're not sniping, don't open fire unless the range is close enough to be deadly.

Tom, 1:33: This is perfect. I can pick off Bruce's men as they arrive from his base. My guys are in great position. I'm cycling them out one at a time to run back to the ammo truck.

Bruce, 1:40: I lost two more guys as they were running up from my base. Next I got shot running down to help them. Then my machine gunner was killed while he was withdrawing to get more ammo. The score is now 6 to 3 and Tom has the strategic advantage, being closer to his respawn point. Time to cut my losses and try another approach.


FIGURE 6


FIGURE 7


FIGURE 8


FIGURE 9


FIGURE 10


FIGURE 11

Tom, 1:45: There he goes. I lost a couple more guys but completely racked up my score as he kept throwing men into my line of fire. That's the ol' Soviet meat-grinder tactic. I have the advantage at 7 to 4. After I'm sure he's left, I'll reload everyone at the ammo truck and let the clock run out. Looks like there won't even be a third round.

Bruce, 1:50: Oh man! Tom's reloading from that truck **(Figure 7)**. Time to use the LAW Launcher on top of Hill 42.

Tom, 1:55: When I hear the first explosion, I figure that Bruce cheated and brought in one of his tanks. Since there's no heavy ordnance allowed in the mission area, maybe he's just goofing around before conceding this round to me. So I step out from the truck just in time to see the second RPG streaking in. This time he hits the truck directly and I lose all five men. Lovely. I'm respawning at my base, the score is 7 to 9, and there's about a half-hour to go. To win, I need to hunt down and kill three Communists without taking any losses. I'll head out along the south beach to circle around behind him.

Bruce, 1:55: When you hit an ammo truck with a rocket, the results are pretty dramatic **(Figures 8-10)**. I'll hang out up here on Hill 48 and send two men to cover the beach.

Bruce, 2:05: There are also sniper rifles on Hill 48. I prefer the zoomable scope on the M21 to the Dragunov's chevron marks. You just use the +/- keys to bracket your target with the horizontal hash marks. Then your range is set to line up the crosshairs wherever you want the bullet to go. But for the Dragunov, you have to call up the command menu to get a distance reading. Aim with the top chevron if you're firing within 300 meters. Otherwise, use the second chevron up to around 600 meters. Since it's not very precise, it's harder to get a head shot. When I see Tom approaching from the beach, it's a simple matter to tag one of his soldiers and win the round **(Figure 11)**.

Round 3

Tom, 12:30: I'm hoping Bruce has taken enough losses to proceed with caution. I'll just head straight for his flag, make sure he's not hiding in the trees, and go for a quick win.

Bruce, 12:30: This time I'm going on the offensive. I'll send my squad up the road to Hill 48. Once they're there, they can cover me while I make a run for Tom's flag. As no one's used the direct route yet, maybe this'll surprise him.

Tom, 12:38: Yikes! I see his troops moving through the trees ahead of me. Either they don't see me, or he hasn't given them permission to fire yet. I'm between them and their flag, so if my men can keep them pinned down, I should be able to safely grab the flag and run it back for a win, circling wide to avoid the fighting. All right, boys, weapons free. Cover me!

Bruce, 12:40: I haven't even reached Hill 36 when I get the contact report. While I'm trying to figure out where Tom's troops are, they snag two of my men. I should've given them orders to open fire sooner, but I didn't want to engage from long range again. I send my respawned troops toward my flag. From there, they'll be able to attack Tom's troops from behind while defending it.

Tom, 12:42: I grabbed the flag and headed out. I've lost only one guy in the fighting behind me. Hold out a little longer, boys, and I'll have this round won.

Bruce, 12:42: Damn, he's got the flag. I'm the only one in a position to cut him off. There's a small bunker near his flag, so I'll hide in there and ambush him as he approaches.

Tom, 12:45: I'm coming through the trees toward my flag when I hear gunfire and bullets hitting the dirt. Either Bruce sent someone over here earlier, or he's hiding out here himself. I drop prone and hang back in the trees to try to see where the tracers are coming from.

Bruce, 12:46: I'm not a big fan of the Soviet flag, but I'm glad that it's bright red and waving over Tom like a huge sign that reads "Shoot Me." I don't know if I hit him, but he pulled back behind some trees. I can see the flag through the foliage, so I know he's back there. I'm firing occasional shots to keep him down, and I've just given orders for all my troops to move toward his position. I've already taken losses, but I can't let Tom get by me with that flag.

Tom, 12:47: By creeping forward, I see that someone seems to be in the defensive bunker in front of my flag. It must be Bruce himself, because the AI pathfinding doesn't do a good job of getting into those bunkers. My kingdom for a LAW. I let loose a little suppression fire and make a dash to one side. Unless he stands up, there's a limited field of view in those bunkers, so I'm hoping to swing out of his line of fire and huck a grenade up in there.

Bruce, 12:48: Just as I'm reloading, I see Tom stand up and run to one side, the huge red flag flapping behind him. I can't see him through the firing slot anymore, so I stand up and see a grenade arc overhead. It explodes behind me as I fire the AK74 on full automatic, but I can't quite aim at him over the lip of the bunker! As the second grenade comes in much closer, it occurs to me that the default loadout is only two grenades, so assuming this one misses...No such luck.

Tom, 12:49: I never did figure out *Flashpoint*'s grenade aiming interface. What's with the circle on the bottom and the dot way over it? At any rate, using my sophisticated TLAR (That Looks About Right) technique, my last grenade soars nicely into the bunker and the way is clear for me to reach my flag. Final score: 12 to 2. I win two out of three and send Bruce Geryk and his lackeys back to the U.S.S.R.

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Get Fit While Playing Games!

Jeff's surefire, five-point plan to give you the body you want **By Jeff Green**



Hi there, gamers! This month I'd like to talk to you about your health. Chances are, if you're spending a great chunk of your free time hunkered behind your computer playing games, you're probably not eating right or getting the proper amount of exercise. Am I right? To find out, read the following two statements and see if they apply to you. Don't cheat—you'll only be cheating yourself!

Yes or no:

1. I have avoided upgrading my video card for the past four years because I can't bend over to reach my PC.

2. On airplanes, I always get my own row.

If you answered yes to either of the above statements, then I'm sorry to say that you have a problem. But chins up, Porky. Dr. Green is here to help.

***

Not long ago, I was just like you. I know it's hard to believe, looking at me now. But the truth is, since starting at *CGW* six years ago, I have put on about 20 pounds. I blame it on many things. Job stress, age, global warming. The wife, bless her, blames something more specific: "It's because you sit on your ass all day playing computer games."

Now I eat nothing but 25-inch hoagies three times a day, and I recommend you do too.

An oversimplification, to be sure. Yes, I do sit on my ass all day, and yes, most of that time I'm playing computer games. But the fact is, I am incredibly active, even while gaming. How so? Glad you asked. Using my own carefully designed health and exercise plan, I have shaved away literally ounces of excess weight, and have returned my heart rate to a zone that my doctor says "no longer requires immediate hospitalization."

And now you too can enjoy similar results. Follow the five-point plan below, and I guarantee that you too will be healthier and happier, without compromising your lifestyle as a hardcore gamer.

1. Get up for beer/donut breaks yourself. It was a hard habit to break, but I've finally stopped using the megaphone by my PC to yell, "Hey woman—beer me!" Now, instead, I hoist myself out of my chair to retrieve more food supplies myself—and the results have been miraculous. Take this one slowly at first, but keep it up and soon you'll be like me, retrieving beer and donuts in *two separate trips*.

2. Do yoga while playing. Not only does this not require much physical motion, but it's trendy. Go to an Internet café and play *Age of Empires* in downward facing dog position, and just watch the ladies stare! For even better results, try this naked.

3. Attach tiny free-weights to your fingers for gaming. I've patented this idea and will soon be selling the weights over the Internet at amazingly low prices, just for you. The idea is that you attach a tiny dumbbell to each finger, so that while you're at your PC, your fingers get a vigorous workout with each keypress. I've been doing this for months, and you should see the results. Sure, the rest of me is flabby and atrophied—one thing at a time!—but my fingers are totally ripped.

4. Play PC sports games. More than half of being "athletic" is simply being able to talk the talk. Never lifted a football in your life? Think "The Big Unit" is something you watch on Cinemax? Listen up, Frodo. Log off *EQ* and force yourself to play *Madden* or *High Heat*.

5. Eat at Subway. Normally I don't like to endorse products by name, what with the whole annoying "ethics" thing we journalists have. But in this case, I'm willing to stretch the rule. Ever since I saw those TV commercials of that big oaf who got thin by eating at Subway, I've been a believer. Now I eat nothing but 25-inch hoagies three times a day, and I recommend you do too. I haven't seen any tangible results so far, but hey, I know that TV doesn't lie.

So, what are you waiting for, tubby? Put down the vat of Ben & Jerry's and get with the program. You'll game better, you'll live longer, and—most important—the ladies will love you for it. And isn't that what being a computer gamer is all about?

For further exercise tips and exclusive autographed photos of Jeff in his yellow lycra bodysuit, email him at jeff_green @ziffdavis.com.

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL SLACK

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